



FACT SHEET

California Environmental Protection Agency
DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL



ABANDONED MINE LANDS PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

May 1998
(Revised 6/2001)

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Toxic Substances Control has developed this Fact Sheet to provide information on the "Abandoned Mine Lands Preliminary Assessment Handbook" (Handbook) dated January 1998. This Fact Sheet will provide background information, problem summary, Handbook contents, and information for obtaining a copy of the Handbook.

BACKGROUND

California has a vast legacy of economic prosperity and innovative technological development stemming from its historic mining activities. Minerals recovered from California have been used to improve many facets of American life. Unfortunately, another legacy associated with historical mining is significant degradation of the environment. The main reason environmental damage occurred is that historic mining operations were not subject to current environmental protection laws.

More than a century of mining has created thousands of Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) with hundreds of millions of tons of mining wastes. California's rapidly growing population is encroaching on areas of historic mining activities, creating a greater potential for adverse effects to human health and the environment.

PROBLEM

Some abandoned mines and associated mining wastes may pose physical or chemical hazards or both. Many of these hazards are the result of historic mining practices, ore processing techniques, surface exposure of ore deposits, and closures found not meeting current standards. Potential hazards vary greatly from one mine to the next. Each abandoned mine and associated mine waste piles need to be evaluated to determine if a potential problem exists.

HANDBOOK CONTENTS

The Handbook was developed to serve a dual purpose: 1) provide non-technical information to explain the concerns associated with AML sites to AML property owners, developers whose projects may be on or adjacent to AML sites, and local planners who make land use decisions; and 2) provide technical information for environmental consultants, local environmental health officials, and other state and federal agency staff who must evaluate California AML sites. The Handbook is divided into three parts and also includes numerous appendices:

Part I of the Handbook provides general, non-technical information outlining the purpose and limitations of the Handbook, overview of the mineral industry, and discussion of physical and chemical hazards that may be encountered on AML sites.

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Abandoned Mine Lands Preliminary Assessment Handbook

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HANDBOOK CONTENTS (cont.)

Part II provides general technical information on conduction an AML investigation, sample collection and analysis methods, human health screening procedures, and environmental screening procedures.

Part III contains a suggested report format. (Note: the report can be tailored to the needs of the investigator.)

Appendices provided in the Handbook contain detailed supplemental technical information on mineral deposits, mineral deposit interaction with the environment, typical mineral processing methods, specific sampling strategy of mine wastes, augering and trenching issues, surface water evaluations, acid generating potential, health and safety, public participation, Waste Extraction Test, Voluntary Cleanup Agreement, and a list of selected state and federal agencies. Several of these appendices were written by the United States Geological Survey.

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can obtain a copy of the Handbook by contacting any of the following individuals:

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Questions regarding information in the Handbook should be directed to Daniel Ziarkowski at (916) 255-3689.