



Department of Toxic Substances Control
Ascon Huntington Beach
November 4, 2024

Thank you to all those who attended the Department of Toxic Substances Control's (DTSC) Ascon restart community open house and meeting on October 10th. In response to questions and comments heard at the meeting, we prepared the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to provide additional information and clarity on the topics discussed.

If you missed the meeting, you can view a recording of the meeting [here](#) and see the presentation slides [here](#).

1. What is telemetry and where can I find the telemetry air monitoring data during restart work?

Telemetry is the automated measurement and wireless transmission of data from remote sources. It allows for near real-time recording and reporting of data to the website. You can find the telemetry air monitoring data at asconhb.com/restart.

Ascon's telemetry air monitoring system is made up of monitoring stations located at the perimeter of the Site that collect and analyze data, which are then transmitted and shared on the Ascon website. The telemetry air monitoring network collects air monitoring data continuously during work hours, which are typically from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, and reports the data to the Ascon website within approximately two hours after collection. No soil movement will be performed when telemetry air monitoring data are not being collected.

2. What are volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and are they sampled and reported in the near real-time telemetry results posted on the [Ascon website](#)?

Yes, the telemetry network records total VOCs and dust concentrations upwind and downwind of the onsite work area, and the net data (downwind – upwind) are available on asconhb.com/restart about two hours after it's measured.

VOCs are a large group of chemicals that evaporate into the atmosphere. They can be found in many products and in both indoor and outdoor air. Many VOCs are human-made chemicals that are used or produced in the manufacture of paints, pharmaceuticals, and refrigerants. VOCs are also present in common household items, including paints, moth balls, aerosol sprays, new furniture and carpeting, fuels, nail polish, and are used for dry cleaning.

VOC concentrations detected downwind of the work area exclude influences from upwind or existing conditions (background). This is referred to as the Site contribution and is displayed and compared to the Site action levels so that the team and the community can see whether the net Site contribution data are above or below action levels in near real-time. These air monitoring action levels were approved by DTSC and South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD).

The dust action level addresses chemicals, specifically metals and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), that may adhere to dust particles and is considered protective for potential dust emissions. As part of the DTSC-approved Air Monitoring Plan and requirements, Ascon also collects air samples that are sent to an offsite laboratory to determine the types of VOCs, and to confirm the effectiveness of mitigation efforts. These laboratory data are typically published at asconhb.com within approximately three weeks of being collected.

If a dust or VOC reading is above its action level, the Ascon team will take timely action to adjust odor and dust mitigation efforts to ensure the community's health is not at risk.

3. Why do some air sampling results take so long to be published?

The community air monitoring plan for Ascon is multi-layered, providing near real-time results for dust and total VOCs within two hours. Samples analyzed for specific VOC constituents must be sent to certified laboratories for more detailed analysis. Laboratory analysis takes time and must be validated prior to publishing the results, taking three weeks or more. Results from both telemetry monitoring for total VOCs and specific VOC analyte sampling corroborate each other.

4. Have there been exceedances in air monitoring results historically?

Ascon's monitoring has consistently shown that air quality has been within health-protective screening levels, including during active work. The remedy restart work is conducted under permit by the South Coast AQMD, the regulatory agency that issues the air permits, as well as under DTSC oversight.

Screening levels take several factors into account, including the type of substances that may be present, the concentration in the air, and how long the exposure lasts. The levels are set to protect potentially sensitive members of the community (e.g., children, pregnant women, elderly individuals, and those with health concerns) and are for both short-term and longer-term exposures.

5. Is contaminated Ascon groundwater impacting our ocean water?

Ongoing groundwater sampling and investigations conducted since 2002 have found that impacts to groundwater are contained within the Site boundaries and are not impacting ocean waters or other offsite areas. Groundwater at the Site does not flow to the ocean, and seawater in the area makes groundwater unusable for drinking water. There are no drinking water production wells within three miles of the Site.

6. As the onsite berms have degraded over time, are they releasing contaminants into the environment?

No, numerous interim actions have been taken over the years to protect onsite berms and their integrity. Additional temporary protective measures are currently in place to ensure that contaminants do not leave the Ascon Site through stormwater. As part of the Final Remedy, all onsite berms will be regraded and contaminated/potentially contaminated soil covered by the protective engineered cap, which will be comprised of clean fill and low-permeability layers (e.g., geotextile and geomembrane).

7. How was Ascon's Final Remedy selected?

Remedy selection for projects like Ascon follows a state process that evaluates the feasibility and the environmental impacts of multiple remedial alternatives. The Final Remedy for Ascon was approved by DTSC following a rigorous, multi-year public review and a formal [Environmental Impact Report \(EIR\)](#) process per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In 2015, DTSC approved a [Final Remedial Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) outlining the Final Remedy selected for the Ascon Site.

As part of the Remedy selection process, DTSC adhered to the federal National Contingency Plan, California Health and Safety Code, and CEQA's requirements, and compared remedial alternatives against EPA's set of nine established statutory criteria. These criteria include overall protection of human health and the environment, long-term effectiveness, and implementability. Ascon's Final Remedy of an engineered cap and long-term monitoring (in perpetuity) was selected because it is protective of human health and the environment and less impactful to the community during implementation of the remedial action.

Full removal of contaminated/potentially contaminated soil with offsite disposal, while considered, was not selected as this alternative had higher potential impacts to the community during implementation of the remedial action. This full removal alternative would have included approximately 190,000 one-way truck trips, including approximately 130,000 one-way truck trips of contaminated/potentially contaminated material needing to travel through communities enroute for disposal and over 60,000 one-way truck trips of

import soils. This alternative's remediation timeline could take up to ten years. You can read more about Ascon's remedial alternatives and their detailed evaluation in the Ascon [Revised Feasibility Study](#) and the [Remedial Action Plan](#).

8. Is Ascon a Superfund Site?

The Ascon Landfill Site is not a federal superfund site and is not listed on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Priorities List. Ascon is an inactive landfill with historic disposal of hazardous substances that is being remediated under DTSC's oversight and is sometimes referred to as a state superfund site. The EPA uses a Hazard Ranking System score to determine if a site needs to be listed, and when they investigated Ascon, the EPA determined that it did not meet the threshold.