

SWRCB JTD Index

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Clean Closure

To All Local Enforcement Agencies:

What is "Clean Closure"?

Clean closure of a solid waste disposal site refers to the complete removal of all waste and waste residuals, including contaminated soils. A clean closure is generally defined as being successful when waste materials and residuals are removed to a point where remaining contaminant concentrations are at or below background levels or clean up levels established by the relevant regulatory agencies. Clean closure is an alternative to more conventional closure methods (closure with waste in place) described in Title 14, California Code of Regulations (14 CCR), Division 7, Chapter 3, Article 7.8, and 23 CCR, Division 3, Chapter 15, Article 8. Clean closure may also be considered a remedial action or a step in a remedial action in some cases.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board (Board) has not adopted regulations specifically concerning clean closure. However, the Board's Closure and Remediation Branch has developed a set of guidelines for Board and Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) staff to follow when overseeing a clean closure. The following guidelines should **not** be construed as regulations. These guidelines, however, are consistent with existing law and regulations and are intended to ensure that public health and safety and the environment are protected from pollution due to the disposal of solid waste. These guidelines are also intended to provide a basis to allow Board and LEA staff of varying background and expertise to deal with clean closure issues in a consistent manner.

What Sites are Candidates for Clean Closure?

Clean closure may be an appropriate alternative for permitted, illegal, or abandoned solid waste disposal sites. Clean closure may also be an appropriate action for sites which closed prior to the current closure regulations, but which are facing a change in land use which may threaten the integrity of the closed site or pose a threat to public health and safety and the environment. Also, clean closure may be an appropriate part of a remedial action for previously closed sites which have developed environmental problems. Sites that generally lend themselves to clean closure include, but are not limited to:

- Small landfills and burn dumps;

- Non-hazardous woodwaste disposal sites;

- Solid and liquid waste treatment and/or processing units; and

- Sites where the cost of clean closure would be less than or equal to the costs of long term monitoring and postclosure maintenance of the site.

What are the Benefits of Clean Closure?

A properly performed clean closure ensures that waste materials and residuals are removed and disposed of in a safe and environmentally sound manner. In addition, clean closing a disposal site can create several advantages for an owner/operator. If done properly, the clean closure of an

entire waste management unit (e.g., a landfill cell or contiguous group of cells) would eliminate the need for the following for that unit: (1) 30 years or more of postclosure maintenance; (2) potential future corrective actions; and (3) Board and LEA inspections of the site. While the clean closure of an illegal disposal site eliminates the necessity for LEA and Board staff inspections, in some areas, particularly rural areas where the use of such sites by local residents has become habitual, continued or even increased inspections may be needed temporarily to prevent reactivation of the illegal disposal site. By clean closing, an owner/operator may also increase the possible postclosure land uses for the site. Furthermore, clean closure plans are typically less involved than conventional closure plans. However, the owner/operator will have to evaluate the potential costs and benefits of clean closure versus those of a conventional closure on a site-by-site basis to determine the viability of this option.

What Does the Clean Closure Process Involve?

The clean closure of a solid waste disposal site is a multiple step process. The steps may include, but are not limited to:

1. Site characterization;
2. Clean closure plan preparation;
3. Review and approval;
4. The actual clean closure; and
5. Verification and approval of the clean closure.

Who Evaluates Clean Closure Proposals?

Adequate advance notification of the appropriate regulatory agencies (Board, Regional Water Quality Control Board [RWQCB], LEA, and in some cases the Air Pollution Control District [APCD] and/or Department of Toxic Substances Control [DTSC] or other agencies as necessary) is necessary to allow review and approval of any proposals as well as observation of the site prior to, during, and after clean closure to verify that the site has been properly clean closed. For clean closures of permitted solid waste disposal sites and those which are subject to 14 CCR, Division 7, Chapter 5, Article 3.4, the review and approval process for clean closure plans is the same as that for conventional closure plans and is described in 14 CCR, Division 7, Chapter 5, Article 3.4. For other sites, the position of coordinating agency for the review and the timeline for the submittal and review of documents by the various agencies should be agreed upon by the agencies at the beginning of each project. The timely submittal of appropriate documentation (e.g., site characterization studies or clean closure plans) allows the approving agencies an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed clean closure prior to the actual clean closure of the site. Failure to involve all of the regulatory agencies early in the clean closure process may lead to lack of final approval of the clean closure of the site and the application of the regulatory requirements described below.

The Board (Closure and Remediation Branch), RWQCB, and LEA must each make a final determination that a solid waste disposal site has been properly clean closed. The determination that a site has been successfully clean closed implies that the potential threats to public health and safety and the environment due to the disposal of solid waste at the site have been mitigated by the clean closure. An owner/operator must provide to these agencies an adequate characterization of the site and satisfactory evidence that all waste and waste residuals were

removed and properly disposed of. If these agencies determine a clean closure was not properly completed, 14 CCR, Division 7, Chapter 3, Article 7.8, and 23 CCR, Division 3, Chapter 15, may apply to the site. If the site was operating on or after January 1, 1988, 14 CCR Division 7, Chapter 5, Articles 3.4 and 3.5 will most likely also apply.

What Information Should be Provided in Clean Closure Proposals?

The minimum components of a clean closure plan should include, but not be limited to:

- Site characterization;
- Excavation and material management;
- Confirmation of waste and degraded material removal; and
- Postclosure maintenance and land use.

The plan should be prepared by a registered civil engineer, a certified engineering geologist, or other qualified person depending on the complexity of the site. The owner /operator should submit all information regarding clean closure proposals, including clean closure plans, to all of the appropriate regulatory agencies.

Site Characterization

The site characterization phase of the clean closure process is probably the most critical phase as it will determine the suitability of the site for clean closure. A complete site characterization will define the extent and character of the wastes present and the levels and extent of any contamination due to the disposal of waste at the site. A complete site characterization may prevent unplanned for and expensive surprises after the actual clean closure process has been initiated. Depending upon the complexity of the site, it may be necessary or advisable to involve the regulatory agencies prior to or during the site characterization process to ensure that an adequate characterization is performed.

For sites with known or suspected environmental problems, site characterization may occur under an enforcement order by one or more regulatory agencies who may require submittal of a workplan prior to the site characterization.

For complicated sites, it may be beneficial to submit the results of the site characterization study to the regulatory agencies for review prior to development of the clean closure plan rather than as part of the clean closure plan.

For relatively uncomplicated sites, it may be adequate to submit the results of the site characterization with the clean closure plan for review.

The owner/operator should supply the following information regarding the site:

- Name and legal description of the site.
- Description of the historical development of the site.
- Name of legal owner/operator, including title, address, and telephone number.
- Map showing the assessor's parcel number, site plot plan, and parcel map including: legal boundaries of the site and adjacent land use, location of existing and proposed footprint of refuse/waste, location of all structures within a 1000-foot

- radius of the site, including all existing and proposed (if any) environmental monitoring, collection, and control systems.
- A description of all refuse/waste materials encountered at the site including how the waste was generated and the method of disposal used. Provide type of waste, volume, and dimensions of each disposal area at the site. Include any chemical characterization of the waste if available or if requested by the regulatory agencies.
- If burning of waste occurred at the site, a chemical characterization of the ash.
- Sampling results identifying background levels of the constituents of concern.
- A description of the character and extent of any soil or ground water contamination discovered during the site characterization study.
- A description of the geology and soils at the site.
- A description of the occurrence of surface water on and adjacent to the site and an estimate of the depth to ground water at the site.
- A description of all existing and proposed environmental monitoring, collection, and control systems for the site as required by the regulatory agencies.
- Information on the occurrence and character of ground water as required by the RWQCB. This information may include but not be limited to:
 - A description of the occurrence and character of ground water on and adjacent to the site.
 - A detailed geologic map of the site with cross sections showing the relationships between the refuse/waste and geologic units and ground water levels.
 - A conceptual hydrogeologic model for the site.

Excavation and Material Management

Excavation and removal of solid waste may be considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). An environmental document or appropriate exemption under CEQA or NEPA may have to be secured and submitted as part of the clean closure plan prior to approval. All applicable federal, state, and local permits (e.g., grading permits, Fish & Game approvals, OSHA reviews, etc.) should be obtained prior to any excavation.

The owner/operator should supply the following information regarding the site and the proposed clean closure:

- Identification of health and safety issues regarding the proposed site activities and a detailed protocol indicating what measures will be taken to ensure protection of the public health and safety and the environment.
- A plan to evaluate and dispose of any hazardous waste encountered during the clean closure operations.
- An excavation plan.

- A description of the sequence of excavation operations including the proposed removal rate and timeframe for the excavation operation.
- A description of the protocol to be followed in monitoring, collecting and controlling leachate, ground and surface water and landfill gas.
- A description of the proposed sampling and testing protocols for verification of clean closure.
- A description of the transport and fate and/or final disposition of the waste materials and residuals that will be excavated from the site.
- A drainage and winterization plan (when applicable).
- Any mitigation measures as called for in any necessary CEQA or NEPA document.
- Financial assurance for the project as necessary.

Confirmation of Refuse/Waste and Degraded Material Removal

The following activities should be planned for and implemented:

- Observation and documentation of removal of refuse/waste.
- Documentation verifying the final disposition of all refuse/waste materials.
- Adequate sampling must be performed after excavation to verify the removal of all waste materials and residuals, including interpretation of the test results by a qualified professional.
- Prepare and submit a map with a letter certifying that the constituents of concern concentration levels in the target media are either at or below the clean up limits established for the project.
- Submit a report documenting the activities which have occurred and verifying completion of clean closure to the appropriate regulatory agencies.
- Indicate on the site deed and/or title that the project was completed and where it was located.
- If the constituents of concern clean up level has not been met and further excavation is deemed not practical, develop and implement a remedial action plan for the site.
- If the site cannot be clean closed then closure and postclosure maintenance plans should be developed and submitted for review and approval, prior to implementation.

Postclosure Maintenance and Land Use

One of the advantages of clean closing a solid waste disposal site is that a postclosure maintenance plan should not be needed if the entire site has been successfully clean closed. A description of the proposed postclosure land use should include:

- The proposed postclosure land use for the site.
- If the clean closure was part of a remedial action, describe any postclosure maintenance activities needed to comply with the implementation of the remedial action plan.

If the clean closure was not successful, a postclosure maintenance plan and a financial assurance mechanism for postclosure maintenance are needed and should be included with the verification report.

These guidelines are intended to provide useful direction for the clean closure of a variety of site types and site conditions. In some instances, certain portions of the information outlined above may not be applicable to a given site or the level of detail necessary may vary due to site conditions. However, it is necessary for all of the regulatory agencies involved to agree on what information is and is not necessary, and the level of detail required, to allow the owner/operator to prepare the necessary documents and to carry out a clean closure that can be approved by all of the agencies.

Additional Information

If you have any questions regarding clean closure, please contact the Closure and Remediation Branch staff person assigned to your jurisdiction for assistance.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

Deputy Director
Permitting and Enforcement Division

Publication #200-94-010

The intent of the advisories is to provide guidance to Local Enforcement Agencies (LEA) in performing their duties. Guidance, for this purpose, is defined as providing explanation of the Board's regulations and statutes.

Unless included by reference in the LEA's Enforcement Program Plan (EPP), advisories are not enforceable in the same manner as regulations because they have not been adopted through the formal rulemaking process (see Government Code sections [11340.5](#) and [11342.6](#)). Advisories do not take precedence over statute or regulation.