

What you need to know about suitability of land use audits

Suitability of land use audits help protect human health and the environment by checking whether a site is safe for its intended use. Every site and audit is different. Rules and guidelines make the process consistent.

Only an EPA-appointed environmental auditor can complete such audits.

Usually, an environmental consultant assesses and cleans up the site. The person who manages the site, such as the owner, hires the environmental auditor.

EPA Victoria appoints environmental auditors with the expertise to independently review the work of environmental consultants.

These audits describe if the land has contamination in its soil and water and explain how it should be managed. This helps councils make decisions about how sites can be used safely.

For more information about environmental audits read: [EPA Publication 2041](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-business/find-a-topic/environmental-audit-system) or visit: <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-business/find-a-topic/environmental-audit-system> or contact EPA Victoria on 1300 372 842.

Important things to know about a suitability of land use audit

1. Reasons for an audit

You may need a suitability of land use audit because of:

- [planning rules or permits](#) (for example, permit condition, Environmental Audit Overlay, Ministerial Direction No.1)
- the outcome from a Preliminary risk screen assessment (see EPA's [Guideline for conducting preliminary risk screen assessments](#)).
- an official notice from EPA
- voluntary reasons, like when you're buying or selling land.

2. Costs and time

Audits cost money and take time. Costs are higher if the site needs to be managed and cleaned up. EPA recommends that you involve environmental auditors early to help find potential issues. A project plan should also factor in unanticipated issues.

An audit of a simple site can take less than a year while bigger or complex sites often take more than one year.

3. Assessing the site

Getting information about and understanding the site is critical. The assessment of the site will be done by a qualified environmental consultant. An environmental auditor will work independently to oversee the work. It is important to engage the environmental auditor early in the process as this will ensure your audit is completed more efficiently and to the standard required. The assessment of the site will:

- study the site's history to see if there's potential contamination
- find out the type and location of the contamination
- decide what work is needed to make the site safe for its intended use
- check different parts of the environment for contamination (this may be done in stages).
- describe how much contamination is okay based on how the site will be used

Complex, large or heavily contaminated sites may need more work, including more investigation. Such sites may need to clean up soil or water over multiple stages. Some contamination may remain on or around the site at the end of an audit. Sites like these are likely to need ongoing management that can include:

- monitoring (of soil, gas or groundwater for example)
- putting in barrier layers
- restricting groundwater use
- restricting how the land can be used
- other management options that may apply.

4. Results of the audit

Environmental auditors provide a statement and a report when they're satisfied contamination issues have been addressed and do not pose unacceptable risks.

A site may be contaminated within safe levels; therefore, an environmental auditor may decide it can still be used.

The audit statement will specify if the site:

- is safe to use
- is safe to use, with some precautions to protect from residual contamination
- cannot be used for some or any activities due to residual contamination.

Recommendations will specify:

- Rules the site needs to follow to make sure it's suitable to use.
- Ways to manage possible risk.

The statement and report go to EPA and the local council. And the owner must give people who will use the site a copy of the report. A copy of the report will also be available on EPA's website.

People in charge of a contaminated site have a [duty to manage it](#). This means they are responsible for managing any risks it poses. More information is available in EPA's [Guide to the duty to manage contaminated land](#).

1 REASONS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT



Planning approval
e.g., planning scheme amendment
PRSA
Due diligence

2 COSTS AND TIME

Project finance
Assessment costs
Environmental Auditor costs
Auditor Engagement

3 ASSESSING THE SITE

Preliminary site investigation
Detailed site investigation
On-site remediation / cleanup



Stakeholder consultation

Off-site delineation
Health risk assessment
Further cleanup

Cleanup and manage residual contamination

4 RESULTS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

Possible CYG Area
Environmental Audit Statement.
Includes possible ongoing management recommendations.

