

The *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* and Pollution Prevention

What is pollution prevention?

Pollution prevention is the use of processes, practices, materials, products, substances or forms of energy that avoid or minimize the creation of pollutants and waste, and reduce the overall risk to the environment or human health.

How do we implement pollution prevention?

Although other methods of environmental protection focus on managing waste and pollution after they have been created, pollution prevention avoids the creation of waste and pollution in the first place.

Effective pollution prevention requires a different approach to the design and operation of businesses such as mines, farms, manufacturing plants, refineries, transportation systems, parks and other facilities that have the potential to create waste. The techniques and practices used to implement pollution prevention can vary from sector to sector, but generally focus on such areas as:

- substituting materials and feedstock with less harmful alternatives;
- product design/reformulation to eliminate waste and pollution;
- changes to improve process efficiency;
- on-site reuse and recycling;
- training staff in safe handling and storage;
- purchasing techniques to reduce waste,
- implementing equipment modifications; and
- operating efficiencies/clean production methods.

The Government of Canada's environmental-protection strategies are driven by a vision of environmentally sustainable economic development. This vision depends on a clean, healthy environment and a strong, healthy economy. By preventing the creation of pollutants and waste, we help protect the environment from harm. By increasing the efficiency of production, avoiding accidental and operational releases, and reducing the non-productive costs of treatment and disposal, we make our economy more efficient and competitive.

What is the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*?

The *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA 1999) is designed to protect the environment and human health, and thereby to contribute to sustainable development, through pollution prevention. The Government of Canada has a duty to administer CEPA 1999 in a manner that promotes enforceable pollution prevention approaches.

How does CEPA 1999 encourage pollution prevention?

The federal government has a number of pollution prevention responsibilities under CEPA 1999. A key one is the management and control of substances listed on Schedule 1 of the Act.

Part 4 of CEPA 1999 addresses environmental protection through pollution prevention planning provisions which, if implemented, can minimize the need for additional regulations or other government interventions to manage the risks to the environment and human health by Schedule 1 substances. It authorizes the Minister of the Environment to require anyone using (i.e. manufacturing or importing) and/or releasing a Schedule 1 substance to prepare and implement a pollution prevention plan to:

- generate action that will contribute to the effective and efficient management of substances listed on Schedule 1 and reduce the overall risk to the environment and human health;
- provide an early opportunity to develop and implement situation-specific solutions; and
- encourage pollution prevention.

Other parts of the Act that contain pollution prevention provisions include the following:

- Part 3 of the Act states that the Minister shall publish or distribute information respecting pollution prevention (the Canadian Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse at www.ec.gc.ca/cppic/en/index.cfm provides Canadians with information on how to put pollution prevention into practice);
- Part 5 states that the Ministers shall give priority to pollution prevention actions in developing proposed regulations or instruments respecting preventive or control actions in relation to substances listed on Schedule 1;
- Part 7 authorizes the Minister, under certain circumstances, to require pollution prevention plans for Canadian sources of international air and water pollution;
- Part 9 authorizes the Governor in Council to make regulations respecting pollution prevention and pollution prevention plans for federal lands and facilities;
- Part 10 authorizes judges to require those in violation of CEPA 1999 to prepare and implement a pollution prevention plan.

What about new substances?

CEPA 1999 contains provisions that enable the government to impose controls on new substances that could harm human health or the environment. Anyone interested in manufacturing or importing a substance that is not on the Domestic Substances List is required to provide specific information on that substance for risk-assessment purposes.

Further information

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- [Pollution Prevention Planning Provisions of Part 4 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999: Guidelines for Implementation](#)
- [Pollution prevention planning handbook:](#)
- [Pollution prevention planning Web site:](#)
- [Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, Environmental Registry:](#)

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