



Department of  
Toxic Substances  
Control



CalEPA  
California Environmental  
Protection Agency



**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 9, 2022**

**CONTACTS:**

Erin Curtis (CalEPA) (916) 634-8428

Allison Wescott (DTSC) (916) 963-6246

Ailene Voisin (Water Board) (916) 917-4052

**California holds Boeing accountable for cleanup at toxic  
Santa Susana Field Laboratory**

*Comprehensive framework sets stage for stringent cleanup  
of Boeing's areas of responsibility at the site*

**SACRAMENTO, CA.** – In a major development to strengthen the cleanup of contaminated soil, groundwater, and stormwater runoff at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) in southeastern Ventura County, the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) today announced a comprehensive framework that establishes strict cleanup protocols and timelines for The Boeing Company.

The framework involves two agencies within CalEPA: the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (Los Angeles Water Board) which has jurisdiction over Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. The framework ensures that Boeing's areas of responsibility will be cleaned up to a stringent standard.

"Santa Susana Field Lab is one of our nation's most high-profile and contentious toxic cleanup sites. For decades, there have been too many disputes and not enough cleanup. Today's settlement prioritizes human health and the environment and holds Boeing to account for its cleanup," said Governor Gavin Newsom.

The former field laboratory sits on a plateau and spans 2,850 acres, 30 miles from downtown Los Angeles. From 1947 to 2006, Boeing and its predecessors, along with NASA and the U.S. Department of Energy, conducted research, development, assembly and testing of rocket engines, small-scale nuclear reactors, and chemical

lasers at the site. Though all industrial activity at the site ended in 2006, radionuclides and other contamination remain. Through the framework released today, the State of California is taking a major step forward to restore the Santa Susana site for safe use by future generations.

Specifically, Boeing will clean up radionuclides in soil to “background,” which means it will clean up the soil to levels that would exist locally without industrial activity. In addition, Boeing will remediate chemical contamination to a health protective standard that could be as stringent as a “Resident with Garden” exposure scenario. A Resident with Garden standard means the cleanup would ensure that it would be safe for people to live onsite and consume homegrown produce from a backyard garden – a standard long advocated for by members of the surrounding community.

In addition, the framework ensures that, following the soil cleanup, stormwater runoff from Boeing’s areas of responsibility will not be polluted. Boeing’s cleanup costs are expected to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, including cleanup costs that have already been expended.

“No community should have to worry that their soil and water are contaminated with toxic chemicals and radioactive waste. Boeing, as well as NASA and the U.S. Department of Energy, are now under binding agreements that compel a science-based, stringent cleanup of the soil and water at Santa Susana,” said Jared Blumenfeld, California’s Secretary for Environmental Protection.

The framework is the result of a 15-month legal mediation to avoid additional litigation under an earlier consent order. The goals of mediation were three-fold:

1. To resolve disputes over Boeing’s remediation obligations for the soil and groundwater cleanup
2. To develop a process to achieve comprehensive cleanup by Boeing in its areas of responsibility at the site
3. To limit further delays and costs that could result from litigation.

“This Santa Susana cleanup framework avoids further delays and cost of litigation and resolves ongoing disputes that have historically bogged down progress, while clearing the path for strong protections for people and the environment,” stated DTSC Director, Dr. Meredith Williams. “As we move forward, DTSC will hold Boeing and the other responsible parties – NASA and DOE – accountable to ensure this cleanup is completed on a tight timeline and based on the best available science.”

The Settlement Agreement with DTSC establishes penalties of up to \$70,000 per day for violations. The agreement also provides a robust and expedient dispute resolution

process. For years, cleanup at SSFL has been stalled due to litigation and disputes over cleanup standards. Under this framework, future disputes will be quickly resolved, and cleanup work unrelated to the dispute will proceed.

“There is still much work to be done, but we are much closer now than ever before to realizing the long-held desire of nearby communities for the cleanup of this site,” said Renee Purdy, the regional board’s executive officer. “Both before and after remediation efforts begin, the board will continue to maintain strict oversight to ensure that stormwater leaving the site does not harm individuals or the environment.”

## **BACKGROUND ON THE AGREEMENTS AND PUBLIC MEETINGS**

### ***DTSC and Boeing Settlement Agreement***

The Settlement Agreement between DTSC and Boeing resolves prior disputes about process, cleanup and decision-making, facilitates the cleanup of Boeing's areas of responsibility using streamlined processes, and establishes a mechanism for quickly resolving any potential future disputes. DTSC will present key elements of this agreement at a public meeting on June 2, 2022.

Highlights of the Settlement Agreement:

- Expediting the cleanup process using a tool called [RCRA FIRST](#) developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency to streamline and accelerate cleanup of contaminated sites.
- Cleaning up radionuclides in soil in Boeing's areas of responsibility to "background," i.e., levels that would exist locally without industrial activity.
- Establishing a range of stringent health protective cleanup standards that will be evaluated during environmental analysis and will not be contested if chosen. The range includes a "Resident with Garden" standard.
- Starting cleanup of the Area I Burn Pit as soon as Spring 2023. Prior soil sampling identified radionuclides, heavy metals, PCBs, and dioxins at levels that exceed screening levels in the area. Cleaning it up first protects wildlife and prevents potentially harmful runoff and migration of hazardous substances.

### ***Los Angeles Water Board and Boeing Proposed MOU***

The Los Angeles Water Board has jurisdiction over surface water at SSFL and it regulates stormwater runoff from the site through a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Because of soil contamination at the site from past industrial activities, this permit, first issued in 1998, requires rigorous controls for stormwater runoff using advanced treatment systems and best management practices, which Boeing has been implementing at the site.

The Los Angeles Water Board and Boeing have agreed to a proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) that would establish the preconditions for future decision-making by the Board after Boeing completes its soil cleanup at the site. This proposed MOU is the subject of a public meeting to be held June 9, 2022, at which the Board will consider adoption of a resolution approving the MOU and authorizing the Executive Officer to enter into the MOU.

The Board will only consider relieving Boeing of its NPDES permit obligations once Boeing's cleanup of soil contamination in its areas of responsibility is completed and stormwater runoff from those areas is shown to no longer be polluted following multiple years of monitoring overseen by the Board. Both DOE and NASA must be issued permits under the NPDES program, so there is no gap in permit coverage for industrial stormwater discharges from the site.

To learn more about these outcomes and others achieved in mediation, the two documents can be found at the following links:

[CalEPA Comprehensive Framework](#)

[DTSC/Boeing Settlement Agreement](#)

[LA Regional Water Board Proposed MOU](#)