



Environmental assessments at the CNSC

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Protecting the environment is an important part of our work at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC). The CNSC assesses the impacts of all nuclear facilities or activities on the environment and human health. This is done through environmental assessments (EAs).

An EA assesses potential interactions between projects or activities (i.e., a nuclear power plant, a uranium mine, or uranium processing facility) and the environment. These interactions include: biophysical aspects of the environment such as air, water, soil, plants, animals, and human health; as well as impacts of the environment on the proposed projects or activities like weather, seismic events and climate change. The EA will also consider aspects important to Indigenous Peoples such as cultural and traditional rights, traditional knowledge, and land use. The EA process guides the planning and management of a project or activity, so that potential adverse effects may be prevented or mitigated. As a result, an informed decision can be made on whether the environment and human health will be protected if the project is allowed to proceed.

How are environmental assessments conducted at the CNSC?

The CNSC conducts EAs under either the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012) or the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act* (NSCA). Early in the process, CNSC staff determine which type of EA applies by reviewing the information provided by the applicant or licensee. The CNSC also provides expert advice on EAs under Indigenous modern land claims and/or self-government agreements by providing expert advice.

EAs under CEAA 2012 are carried out early in the licensing process (at the beginning of a project's lifecycle) and serve as a

Quick facts

- The CNSC conducts EAs as part of its review of all nuclear project applications under the *Nuclear Safety and Control Act* (NSCA).
- The CNSC is one of three responsible authorities identified under the CEAA 2012 that conducts EAs for designated projects.
- An EA provides an opportunity for the participation of the public and Indigenous Peoples; this in turn strengthens the quality of the EA.
- The CNSC is not the responsible authority for carrying out EAs in areas under an Indigenous modern land claim or self-government agreement (such as the rights given under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement). The CNSC will respect the terms of the agreement and work with communities by providing expert advice as requested.
- The CNSC's Participant Funding Program offers funding to help members of the public, not-for-profit organizations and Indigenous groups prepare for and participate in key stages of the CNSC's EA processes, including Commission proceedings.



planning tool to minimize or avoid adverse environmental effects before they occur, and incorporate environmental factors into decision making for designated projects. Ongoing and past CEAA 2012 (and the former CEAA 1992) EAs are listed on the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry](#).

An EA under the NSCA is conducted for projects not listed in the *Regulations Designating Physical Activities* or for projects previously assessed under CEAA 2012 (or its predecessor CEAA 1992). An EA report under the NSCA is prepared for a project or activities at the end of the licence term and for which the proposed licence renewal or amendments are not listed in those regulations. The EA report is a summary of the technical assessments for all projects or activities regulated by the CNSC that demonstrate potential interactions with the environment. This is done to ensure that the applicant or licensee will, in carrying on a licensed activity, make adequate provision for the protection of the environment and the health of persons. An EA report under the NSCA is made available to anyone upon request to the [Environmental Assessment inbox](#).

How and when do the public and Indigenous groups get involved?

Most EAs provide opportunities for public participation and Indigenous engagement. Engagement allows the CNSC to obtain valuable information on local and traditional knowledge and to hear concerns and address questions about proposed projects, which strengthens the EA's quality.

Public and Indigenous engagement opportunities are determined based on the level of interest and the extent to which projects or activities have the potential to adversely impact Aboriginal and/or treaty rights. Participation opportunities can include: comment periods on an EA, outreach events such as community information sessions, face-to-face meetings with CNSC staff and/or the proponents of the proposed actions, and opportunities to participate at a Commission proceeding by oral and/or written intervention. In addition, the CNSC uses the EA process to fulfill its legal duty to consult Indigenous Peoples on any potential project or activity. For more information on the CNSC's approach to Indigenous consultation, see the [Codification of current practice: Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission \(CNSC\) Commitment to Aboriginal Consultation](#).

What is the Independent Environmental Monitoring Program?

In addition to its regulatory oversight and compliance verification activities, the CNSC launched a separate but complementary Independent Environmental Monitoring Program (IEMP) in 2012. This program acts as another measure to verify the safety of the public and the environment around licensed nuclear facilities. The IEMP involves measuring and analyzing samples taken from public areas around nuclear facilities. Samples may be taken from air; water; soil; sediment; vegetation, such as grass and weeds; and some food, such as meat and produce in the vicinity of the nuclear facility. For more information on the IEMP, and to see results from sampling done in previous years, visit the [IEMP Web page](#).

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