Frequently Asked Questions

What is the definition of a "site"?
A "site" typically includes the pollution source (which may be an active or legacy site), the migration route, and any areas where people can be exposed to pollution above standards.

How does Blacksmith use the information in the database?
Blacksmith uses the database to help national governments evaluate existing and potential environmental health problems, analyze trends, and set priorities for cleanup. The database is not open to the public, but is shared with (but not between) governments and partner organizations.

Will my site screening lead to a cleanup project at the site?
One goal of the inventory is to help Blacksmith and local governments identify sites that require immediate attention. There is never a guarantee that your site screening will lead to a cleanup project, but if the screening indicates there is a significant public health risk, it is a possibility. Investigators should explain the grogram goals to any curious locals, but should not promise any further action or create expectations among the local population that the site will be cleaned.

How do I locate polluted sites to assess?
There are many ways to identify sites. Here are some good sources:
- Ask your Country Coordinator or Regional Coordinator for a site list
- Ask a local environmental organization or university environmental studies department.
- Ask the local government (starting with the pollution control agency or health agency). Specifically ask about industrial areas, and if industries for which Blacksmith often finds contamination issues are present.
- Search newspaper records for articles about polluted sites
- Search for reports from the government, World Health Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, or other organizations
- Search for peer-reviewed journal articles about polluted sites

What if a site does not currently affect people, but could in the near future?
Some sites do not have immediate chemical exposures to humans but may pose a risk to people in the near future. For example, a rusting storage tank of ammonia is threatening to burst, and then poison a local population. While there are no test results that show an immediate pathway to a population, clearly this site is a risk to human health.

In this case, list the affected population as the number of people at risk if the tank fails and leaks. List as much information related to the potential hazard as you

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can – describing the issue to others so they can visualize the problem, and your thinking on your screening.

What language should I use when I enter information into the database?
You are free to enter information in your local language or English. If you enter your screening in your local language, we will translate it and paste English text next to your original text. We will not delete your text.

What is the Blacksmith Index?
The Blacksmith Index is a score from 0-10 that indicates the relative human health risk posed by a site (10 indicates the highest risk). The Blacksmith Index is automatically generated from data about pollutant types, pollutant concentrations, pathways, and populations at risk that investigators enter into the database.

Can I get an advance payment for site screening costs?
In certain cases it is possible for Blacksmith to send an advance payment for site screening expenses, particularly for your first site screenings. This must be negotiated with your Regional Director. Blacksmith will not send regular advances every month.

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