

SENATE BILL NO. 363—SENATOR TITUS

MARCH 10, 1999

Referred to Committee on Natural Resources

SUMMARY—Provides incentives for removal or remediation of environmental contamination.
(BDR 40-799)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No.
Effect on the State or on Industrial Insurance: Yes.

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EXPLANATION – Matter in ***bolded italics*** is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

AN ACT relating to hazardous materials; providing incentives for the voluntary removal or rendering harmless of environmental contamination; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, REPRESENTED IN SENATE
AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

- 1 **Section 1.** Chapter 459 of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto
2 the provisions set forth as sections 2 to 23, inclusive, of this act.
- 3 **Sec. 2.** *As used in sections 2 to 23, inclusive, of this act, unless the*
4 *context otherwise requires, the words and terms defined in sections 3 to*
5 *11, inclusive, of this act have the meanings ascribed to them in those*
6 *sections.*
- 7 **Sec. 3.** *“Administrator” means the chief of the division.*
- 8 **Sec. 4.** *“Division” means the division of environmental protection of*
9 *the state department of conservation and natural resources.*
- 10 **Sec. 5.** *“Eligible property” means real property located in this state*
11 *that:*
- 12 1. *Is not listed on the National Priorities List contained in Appendix*
13 *B of Part 300 of Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations;*
- 14 2. *Is not the subject of a pending investigation or proceeding by the*
15 *division; and*
- 16 3. *Contains the site or probable site of a release of a hazardous*
17 *substance.*

1 **Sec. 6.** *“Hazardous substance” means a substance or combination*
2 *of substances whose presence gives rise to liability or potential liability on*
3 *the part of an owner or operator under NRS 459.537 or 42 U.S.C. §*
4 *9607(a).*

5 **Sec. 7.** *“Participant” means a person whose application to*
6 *participate in the program has been approved by the administrator.*

7 **Sec. 8.** *“Program” means voluntary cleanup and relief from liability*
8 *pursuant to sections 2 to 23, inclusive, of this act.*

9 **Sec. 9.** *“Prospective purchaser” means a person who is not a*
10 *responsible party and who has entered into a contract, or holds an*
11 *option, to purchase an eligible property for its fair market value in a*
12 *transaction at arm’s length.*

13 **Sec. 10.** *“Remedial agreement” means an agreement between a*
14 *participant and the division specifying the action to be taken to remove or*
15 *remedy hazardous substances present on an eligible property.*

16 **Sec. 11.** *“Responsible party” means a person who caused or*
17 *contributed to the release of a hazardous substance.*

18 **Sec. 12.** 1. *A responsible party with respect to an eligible property,*
19 *or a prospective purchaser of an eligible property may apply to*
20 *participate in the program. The application must be made to the*
21 *administrator in writing and must include:*

22 *(a) The name of the applicant, the name of the owner of the property*
23 *and the name of any responsible party who is not the owner or the*
24 *applicant;*

25 *(b) The legal description of the property;*

26 *(c) An environmental assessment of the property, including the*
27 *source, nature and location of all hazardous substances known to, or*
28 *reasonably believed by, the applicant to be located on the property;*

29 *(d) A proposed general plan for removal or remediation on the*
30 *property;*

31 *(e) The applicant’s certification that the information contained in the*
32 *application is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, true, complete and*
33 *not misleading; and*

34 *(f) An accompanying application fee of \$500.*

35 2. *The administrator shall approve or deny an application made*
36 *pursuant to subsection 1 within 60 days after its submission, unless for*
37 *good cause he extends the period for not more than an additional 30*
38 *days. Notice of an extension must be delivered to the applicant before the*
39 *expiration of the original period for processing the application.*

40 3. *If the administrator does not approve or deny the application*
41 *within the time allowed by subsection 2, the application shall be deemed*
42 *approved if it is accompanied by a signed opinion of an attorney at law*
43 *licensed to practice in this state and a signed statement of a consultant*

1 *certified, or exempt from the requirement of certification, as provided by*
2 *NRS 459.500, that:*

3 *(a) The information is, to the best knowledge and belief of each*
4 *signer, true, complete and not misleading; and*

5 *(b) The action proposed in the general plan meets the requirements of*
6 *section 13 of this act.*

7 *4. If the administrator denies an application, he shall deliver to the*
8 *applicant, within 30 days after the denial, a written explanation of the*
9 *reasons for denial.*

10 **Sec. 13. 1. After an application is approved, the participant shall**
11 **submit a remedial agreement to the administrator for his approval.**

12 **2. The administrator shall approve a remedial agreement only if:**

13 **(a) The agreement:**

14 **(1) Provides for the recovery by the division of all direct and**
15 **indirect costs, in excess of the application fee, of overseeing and**
16 **supervising the removal or remediation of the hazardous substance or**
17 **substances on the property;**

18 **(2) Specifies in detail the action constituting the removal or**
19 **remediation to be taken on the property; and**

20 **(3) Includes a grant to the administrator of an irrevocable easement**
21 **or right of entry onto the property to oversee and observe the work during**
22 **and after the removal or remediation;**

23 **(b) The removal or remediation of the hazardous substance or**
24 **substances will:**

25 **(1) Restore the property to the condition to which it would be**
26 **restored if the division caused action to be taken pursuant to NRS**
27 **459.537;**

28 **(2) Be performed by competent, financially responsible technicians**
29 **and supervised by a consultant certified, or exempt from the requirement**
30 **of certification, as provided by NRS 459.500;**

31 **(3) Not cause, contribute to or worsen any release or threatened**
32 **release of a hazardous substance on the property; and**

33 **(4) Adequately protect human health and the environment; and**

34 **(c) The participant is financially capable of undertaking the removal**
35 **or remediation of the hazardous substance or substances.**

36 **3. If the participant is not the owner of the property, the**
37 **administrator shall not approve a remedial agreement unless the owner**
38 **first agrees to the terms of the agreement.**

39 **4. Before approving a remedial agreement, the administrator shall:**

40 **(a) Publish a notice and brief summary of the agreement in a**
41 **newspaper of general circulation in the county where the property is**
42 **located;**

1 **(b) Make reasonable efforts to provide personal notice to all**
2 **responsible parties known to him and to all owners and residents of**
3 **property within 500 yards of the outer boundary of the property on which**
4 **the work is to be performed;**

5 **(c) Provide 30 days for the submission of written comments; and**

6 **(d) Hold a public hearing in the county where the property is located.**

7 **5. If the administrator disapproves a proposed remedial agreement,**
8 **he shall deliver to the participant, within 30 days after the disapproval, a**
9 **written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval.**

10 **Sec. 14. 1. After a participant has completed the action specified in**
11 **his remedial agreement for the removal or remediation of hazardous**
12 **substances, the consultant who supervised the removal or remediation**
13 **shall certify to the administrator that the action has been completed**
14 **according to the agreement. After the administrator has verified the**
15 **certification, he shall issue the participant a certificate of completion.**

16 **2. A certificate of completion must:**

17 **(a) Contain the name of the participant and of any other person**
18 **relieved from liability by the certificate and the legal description of the**
19 **property to which it relates;**

20 **(b) Summarize the nature of the removal or remediation performed on**
21 **the property, and the nature of the relief provided under sections 2 to 23,**
22 **inclusive, of this act; and**

23 **(c) Be recorded by the administrator in the office of the county**
24 **recorder of the county where the real property is located, and indexed to**
25 **show its relation to that real property.**

26 **3. If the administrator does not issue a certificate of completion after**
27 **receiving the supervising consultant's certification that the work has**
28 **been completed, he shall deliver to the participant, within 30 days after**
29 **his receipt of the certificate, a written explanation of the reasons why the**
30 **certificate was not issued.**

31 **Sec. 15. 1. Except as otherwise provided in section 16 of this act,**
32 **the holder of a certificate of completion issued by the administrator is not**
33 **a responsible party with respect to a release of a hazardous substance**
34 **occurring on the property to which the certificate relates before the**
35 **certificate was issued. The state may not maintain an action under**
36 **federal law or NRS 459.537 to recover costs from the holder with respect**
37 **to such a release.**

38 **2. The relief from liability provided by a certificate of completion**
39 **remains effective despite:**

40 **(a) A subsequent change in state or federal law;**

41 **(b) Subsequent discovery that the removal or remediation did not fully**
42 **restore the property to the condition required by the remedial agreement,**

1 *if the participant exercised reasonable care in the removal or*
2 *remediation; and*

3 *(c) Discovery that a substance not considered hazardous at the time*
4 *the certificate was issued has been released on the property.*

5 **Sec. 16.** *The holder of a certificate of completion is not released*
6 *from liability:*

7 *1. If he obtained approval of his application, approval of his*
8 *remedial agreement or issuance of the certificate by means of fraud,*
9 *misrepresentation or a knowing failure to disclose material information;*

10 *2. If the existence of the hazardous substance on the property was*
11 *not disclosed in his remedial agreement, whether or not he knew or*
12 *should have known of its existence;*

13 *3. With respect to a release of a hazardous substance caused by him*
14 *or his agent, unless the release is remedied before the certificate of*
15 *completion is issued and is included in the certificate of completion;*

16 *4. In a criminal prosecution or an action for damage to a natural*
17 *resource; or*

18 *5. In an action for nuisance at common law, for trespass or for the*
19 *conduct of an abnormally dangerous activity.*

20 **Sec. 17.** *1. The relief from liability provided by section 15 of this*
21 *act extends to another person who:*

22 *(a) Purchases or leases the property to which the certificate of*
23 *completion relates; or*

24 *(b) Acquires, merges with or purchases substantially all of the assets*
25 *of the holder of the certificate,*
26 *after the certificate is issued, if the other person is not otherwise a*
27 *responsible party. The other person is subject to any duties of the original*
28 *holder of the certificate under the remedial agreement or the certificate.*

29 *2. The relief provided to a subsequent owner or lessee continues even*
30 *if it is determined that the original holder of the certificate is not released*
31 *from liability because of a provision of section 16 of this act if:*

32 *(a) The subsequent owner or lessee purchased or leased the property*
33 *in good faith for its fair market value; and*

34 *(b) The actions of the original holder of the certificate cannot be*
35 *attributed to the subsequent owner or lessee under a provision of law*
36 *other than this chapter.*

37 *3. If the original holder of a certificate of completion is a prospective*
38 *purchaser, the relief from liability provided by section 15 of this act*
39 *extends to the person from whom he purchases the property if:*

40 *(a) The seller and purchaser so agree;*

41 *(b) The seller bears the expense of removal or remediation performed*
42 *on the property, directly or indirectly;*

1 (c) The seller is a responsible party only because of his ownership of
2 the property; and

3 (d) The administrator approves the extension of relief and
4 incorporates it into the certificate of completion.

5 **Sec. 18. 1.** A person who, without participating in the management
6 of a parcel of real property, holds or is the beneficiary of evidence of title
7 to the property primarily to protect a security interest in the property is
8 not a responsible party with respect to a release of a hazardous substance
9 on the property if:

10 (a) The owner of the property is relieved from liability under sections
11 2 to 23, inclusive, of this act with respect to the release;

12 (b) The owner or holder of evidence of title did not cause the release;
13 and

14 (c) The owner or holder of evidence of title does not participate
15 actively in decisions concerning hazardous substances on the property.

16 2. A lender to a prospective purchaser to enable him to participate in
17 a program is not a responsible party solely as the result of making the
18 loan.

19 **Sec. 19.** A prospective purchaser is not a responsible party solely as
20 the result of:

21 1. Conducting an environmental assessment of real property;

22 2. Contracting to purchase, or acquiring an option to purchase, real
23 property;

24 3. Applying to participate in a program; or

25 4. Conducting or supervising removal or remediation of a hazardous
26 substance or substances, while exercising reasonable care, under an
27 approved remedial agreement.

28 **Sec. 20. 1.** The holder of a certificate of completion may maintain
29 an action against a responsible party to recover the holder's costs of
30 performing removal or remediation of a hazardous substance or
31 substances under a program.

32 2. If the holder is a prospective purchaser and his seller qualifies for
33 relief from liability under section 17 of this act, the seller may maintain
34 an action against a responsible party to recover the seller's costs of
35 performing removal or remediation of a hazardous substance or
36 substances under a program.

37 **Sec. 21. 1.** A participant may terminate his participation in a
38 program upon 30 days' written notice to the administrator.

39 2. The administrator may terminate the participation of a participant
40 in a program only if:

41 (a) The participant, after a reasonable period, has not proposed and is
42 unlikely to be able to propose a remedial agreement that meets the
43 requirements of section 13 of this act;

1 ***(b) The participant fails materially to comply with the requirements of***
2 ***the remedial agreement or sections 2 to 23, inclusive, of this act; or***

3 ***(c) From information not known to the administrator when the***
4 ***remedial agreement was approved, he determines that the removal or***
5 ***remediation in progress or to be performed on the property poses a***
6 ***serious threat of harm to human health or the environment.***

7 ***3. An application, remedial agreement or certificate of completion is***
8 ***not an admission of liability on the part of the applicant or participant,***
9 ***but a termination of participation does not otherwise affect the rights of***
10 ***the division.***

11 ***Sec. 22. 1. A decision of the administrator to approve an***
12 ***application or a remedial agreement or to issue a certificate of***
13 ***completion is final and may not be reviewed.***

14 ***2. If the administrator denies an application for any reason other***
15 ***than incompleteness, disapproves a proposed remedial agreement, does***
16 ***not issue a certificate of completion within the time allowed or terminates***
17 ***the participation of a participant in a program, the applicant or***
18 ***participant may apply to the state environmental commission to review***
19 ***the decision under chapter 233B of NRS.***

20 ***Sec. 23. The administrator shall use his best efforts to negotiate with***
21 ***the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that a certificate of***
22 ***completion issued pursuant to sections 2 to 23, inclusive, of this act will***
23 ***relieve a participant from liability to the United States to the same extent***
24 ***as those sections provide relief from liability to this state.***

25 ***Sec. 24. NRS 459.537 is hereby amended to read as follows:***

26 459.537 1. If the person responsible for a leak or spill of or an
27 accident involving hazardous waste, hazardous material or a regulated
28 substance does not act promptly and appropriately to clean and
29 decontaminate the affected area properly, and if his inaction presents an
30 imminent and substantial hazard to human health, public safety or the
31 environment, money from the account for the management of hazardous
32 waste may be expended to pay the costs of:

33 (a) Responding to the leak, spill or accident;

34 (b) Coordinating the efforts of state, local and federal agencies
35 responding to the leak, spill or accident;

36 (c) Managing the cleaning and decontamination of an area for the
37 disposal of hazardous waste or the site of the leak, spill or accident;

38 (d) Removing or contracting for the removal of hazardous waste,
39 hazardous material or a regulated substance which presents an imminent
40 danger to human health, public safety or the environment; or

41 (e) Services rendered in responding to the leak, spill or accident, by
42 consultants certified pursuant to regulations adopted by the commission.

1 2. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection ~~H~~ **or sections 2 to**
2 **23, inclusive, of this act**, the director shall demand reimbursement of the
3 account for money expended pursuant to subsection 1 from any person who
4 is responsible for the accident, leak or spill, or who owns or controls the
5 hazardous waste, hazardous material or a regulated substance, or the area
6 used for the disposal of the waste, material or substance. Payment of the
7 reimbursement is due within 60 days after the person receives notice from
8 the director of the amount due. The provisions of this section do not apply
9 to a spill or leak of or an accident involving natural gas or liquefied
10 petroleum gas while it is under the responsibility of a public utility.

11 3. At the request of the director, the attorney general shall initiate
12 recovery by legal action of the amount of any unpaid reimbursement plus
13 interest at a rate determined pursuant to NRS 17.130 computed from the
14 date of the incident.

15 4. As used in this section:

16 (a) "Does not act promptly and appropriately" means that the person:

17 (1) Cannot be notified of the incident within 2 hours after the initial
18 attempt to contact him;

19 (2) Does not, within 2 hours after receiving notification of the
20 incident, make an oral or written commitment to clean and decontaminate
21 the affected area properly;

22 (3) Does not act upon the commitment within 24 hours after making
23 it;

24 (4) Does not clean and decontaminate the affected area properly; or

25 (5) Does not act immediately to clean and decontaminate the affected
26 area properly, if his inaction presents an imminent and substantial hazard to
27 human health, public safety or the environment.

28 (b) "Responding" means any efforts to mitigate, attempt to mitigate or
29 assist in the mitigation of the effects of a leak or spill of or an accident
30 involving hazardous waste, hazardous material or a regulated substance,
31 including, without limitation, efforts to:

32 (1) Contain and dispose of the hazardous waste, hazardous material or
33 regulated substance.

34 (2) Clean and decontaminate the area affected by the leak, spill or
35 accident.

36 (3) Investigate the occurrence of the leak, spill or accident.

37 **Sec. 25.** 1. This section and sections 1 and 23 of this act become
38 effective upon passage and approval.

39 2. Sections 2 to 22, inclusive, and 24 of this act become effective on
40 October 1, 1999.