

## **Risk Perceptions and Public Preferences for Risk Reduction at Hazardous Waste Sites: a Survey of the Italian Public**

Cleaning up contaminated sites is currently considered one of the most important environmental policy priorities in many western countries and it is now a new challenge for many Chinese cities and Agencies. Remediation of contaminated sites is attractive because it reduces risks to human health and ecological systems, and brings a host of potential social and economic benefits. Public programs are deemed necessary by the law and in practice to address contamination at orphan site and to speed up the general processes of cleanups in most countries. People opinion regarding these programs in general and the priorities to be addressed is useful and pertinent given the large amount of resources to be devoted to the goal of remediation.

This paper draws on the result of a survey of members of the general public living near industrial and contaminated sites placed in the national Priority List in Italy, to elicit their preferences for reductions in health risks associated with contaminated site exposures and for the redevelopment and reuse of the sites. We use the responses to the survey questions to investigate key aspects of the benefits of public policies that pursue remediation of hazardous waste sites.

In the paper we investigate

- (i) how people perceive the risks at contaminated sites.
- (ii) how these perceptions affect the tradeoffs that people are prepared to make between different risks they are exposed and
- (iii) how these perceptions affect the resources people are prepared to allocate to reducing such risks.

Risk is described to people in a stylized fashion as a multi-attribute complex where the size of the risk reduction involved is balanced with the size of the population that would be accruing such risk reductions, and the time horizon of risk reduction .

Item (i) is particularly important when addressing risk communication issues, while (ii) and (iii) are key inputs into policymaking. They allow government agencies to understand people's priorities and to estimate the (monetized) benefits of proposed or existing safety policies.

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