



Air Force Base Conversion Agency Fact Sheet

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What Is the Role of Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs)?

Restoration advisory boards (RABs) are a mechanism to improve public involvement in environmental cleanup at military installations. This Fact Sheet describes the specific roles and responsibilities of RABs at closing and realigning bases.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) recognize the importance of public involvement at military installations that require environmental restoration. Therefore, EPA and DoD developed joint Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) guidelines.

■ **What is the purpose of RABs?**

RABs bring together people who reflect the diverse interests within the local community, enabling the early and continued flow of information between the affected community, DoD and environmental oversight agencies.

RABs were created to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice and can actively participate in a timely and thorough manner in the review of restoration documents. For the purpose of RABs, the term "stakeholder" is defined as parties that are actually or potentially affected by restoration activities at an installation. RAB community members will provide advice to the decision-makers on restoration issues. The RAB is a forum to be used for the expression and careful consideration of diverse points of view.

The RAB complements, but is not a replacement for, other types of community outreach and participation activities required by law, regulation, or policy. Therefore, all existing public involvement requirements must still be completed by the installation, including the community relations requirements of CERCLA as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA); and public involvement requirements of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and any state environmental regulations.

■ **Are there specific requirements for RABs?**

DoD and EPA provided guidelines to assist DoD installations in developing and implementing RABs. The guidelines are intended to be flexible so the DoD installation can adapt the RAB to meet the individual needs of the community.

Each RAB should develop a mission statement that describes its overall purpose and goals, and should develop a set of operating procedures.

Each RAB should consist of representatives from DoD, EPA, state and local government, and members of the community. DoD also specifies certain requirements regarding the selection process for RAB

co-chairs. The Air Force's co-chair is determined by the installation commander or other Air Force decision-maker; community members of the RAB are responsible for selecting their co-chair.

Subject to the availability of funding, the Air Force will provide administrative support to activities unique to and directly associated with establishing and operating a RAB.

■ ***What role can RABs have in evaluating prioritizing environmental cleanup?***

The Department of Defense has developed a risk-based framework for setting environmental cleanup priorities at military installations. Cleanup sites are rated according to their relative risk (high, medium, or low), and sites with higher relative risk are generally cleaned up earlier.

It is Air Force policy to provide opportunities for regulator and other stakeholder involvement in risk-based priority-setting decisions for environmental cleanup. Because RABs include diverse community interests, regulators and community members can play a significant role in this process. BRAC installations also receive advice from LRAs that may influence cleanup priorities; to the extent appropriate, BRAC installations will coordinate the results of risk-based cleanup evaluations with both RABs and LRAs.

Installations will provide RAB members and LRAs with training on the relative risk site evaluation approach, the federal budgeting process, and how these affect prioritization of cleanup activities so that RABs and LRAs can provide informed advice on priority-setting issues. Prior to submission of cleanup funding needs, installations and their RABs and LRAs will conduct and/or reassess risk evaluations of their sites.

Installations will develop their budget requests, along with RAB and LRA advice on sequencing (including risk evaluations, redevelopment plans, and other factors important to the community and the Air Force). When the RAB and/or LRA sequencing varies from the Air Force program guidelines, installations will record the differences and their rationale and provide this information with their budget submittals. When installations are notified of substantial programmatic changes that will affect the scope of the environmental cleanup program, installations will consult with RABs and LRAs in determining what program execution modification might be necessary.

As base-specific budget allocations are made (which may occur more than once a year), the installation will advise the RAB and LRA of funds received, projects funded, and work remaining. Installations will discuss funding and priorities with RABs and LRAs and provide opportunity for them to update their advice based on the most current information. The installation will consider the RAB and LRA advice along with other management issues in making cleanup decisions. RABs are *advisory* bodies, however, and final decision-making authority remains with the Air Force.

■ ***Can non-environmental-cleanup issues be addressed by RABs?***

Because RABs provide a direct channel for communication to the installation, community members may raise some non-restoration issues during RAB discussions. Although these issues may not be appropriate for discussion within the context of the RAB, DoD will be responsive to these concerns by referring them to the appropriate offices at the installation or to alternative forums that are more appropriate for the issue. For example, at closing installations, non-restoration issues can be referred to the local redevelopment authority, the DoD Base Transition Coordinator, and/or the BRAC Cleanup Team.

Additional information on this topic can be found in:

- [Appendix F of the DoD Base Reuse Implementation Manual](#)

What is the Role of Restoration Advisory Boards (RABs)?

- [Sections 1.1, 1.2, and 1.6](#) of the Air Force *Base Conversion Handbook, BRAC 95 Update*
 - Title 32, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 202, "Restoration Advisory Boards" (proposed rule)
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The constantly evolving legal and regulatory environment for military base conversion and reuse has led the Air Force Base Conversion Agency to develop a series of Fact Sheets to provide concise, timely, and accurate information to base conversion participants and the general public. These Fact Sheets are based on requirements established by law and regulation and reflect the policies and guidance in the DoD *Base Reuse Implementation Manual* and the Air Force *Base Conversion Handbook*. Fact Sheets are organized topically according to the three general phases of base conversion: conversion planning, disposal decision making, and decision implementation.

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[AFBCA Home Page](#) [Contents](#)