[music]

[Narrator] THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OPERATES THOUSANDS OF FACILITIES TO PROMOTE THE SECURITY AND WELFARE OF AMERICAN CITIZENS.

FACILITIES LIKE MILITARY BASES AND WEAPONS PLANTS HANDLE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS. LAWS REQUIRE THE GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THESE HAZARDS TO MAKE SURE THESE MATERIALS DON’T ENDANGER HUMAN HEALTH OR THE ENVIRONMENT.

SOMETIMES THE GOVERNMENT CAN CLEAN UP CONTAMINANTS ENTIRELY. IN OTHER CASES, THE GOVERNMENT LEAVES CONTAMINANTS IN PLACE BUT FINDS SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC FROM ANY HAZARDS.

CONGRESS HAS MANDATED THAT THESE FEDERAL SITES MUST BE REVIEWED EVERY FIVE YEARS TO ENSURE THE REMEDIES ARE WORKING PROPERLY. THE FIVE-YEAR REVIEW DOCUMENTS ONGOING MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES AND EVALUATES WHETHER ONSITE CONTAMINANTS POSE A HEALTH RISK.

THIS SITE USED TO HOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE FROM NEARBY ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE. TODAY, WORKERS ARE TESTING GROUNDWATER FOR CONTAMINATION LEFT BEHIND.

[David Connolly, Andrews AFB Environmental Restoration Program] The five-year review is a way to step back out of all the details that occur at a hazardous waste cleanup site and really assess whether the remedy that we’ve installed is effective at protecting human health and the environment.

[Narrator] TO CONDUCT A FIVE-YEAR REVIEW, CONNOLLY FIRST ASSESSES THE DIFFERENT HAZARDS AND REMEDIES ON THE SITE. HE ANALYZES THE LEVELS OF CONTAMINANTS. HE MAY CONDUCT A SITE INSPECTION AND INTERVIEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS OR SITE WORKERS. HE THEN COMPILES ALL THIS INFORMATION INTO THE FIVE-YEAR REVIEW REPORT.

[Connolly] The five-year review identifies the environmental problem, the decisions that have been made to correct it, and assesses whether or not the remedy is effective.

[Narrator] PREPARING THE REPORT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH FACILITY’S OWNER, LIKE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OR DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY. REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY AND STATE OR TRIBAL AUTHORITIES REVIEW THE REPORT TO PROVIDE INPUT AND ENSURE CHECKS AND BALANCES IN THE REVIEW PROCESS.

[Jeff Crane, USEPA Remedial Project Manager] The EPA representative looks at the five-year review and either confirms the lead agency’s findings, or can issue an independent assessment and a set of findings.

[music]

[Narrator] LENNY SIEGEL RUNS A NON-PROFIT THAT PROMOTES PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN FEDERAL FACILITIES.

[Lenny Siegel, Community Activist/Resident] Community members have an important role to play at contamination sites for two real reasons. One is, they’re the people who are impacted. They drink the water, they breathe the air, they use the land. It affects their health, their property values. Secondly, they’re the people who have been there all along and are going to be there in the future. They know more about these sites, often, than the regulators and responsible parties.

[Narrator] PUBLIC NOTICES ALERT COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHEN A FIVE-YEAR REVIEW IS GETTING UNDERWAY AND WHEN THE REPORT IS RELEASED. IN SOME CASES, SITE MANAGERS REQUEST INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

[Siegel] You can’t wait until after the whole thing is done to give your opinion. You’ve got to be there when the people from the government are there to ask questions.

[Earl Mitchell, Brandywine North Keys Civic Association] I think it should be an ongoing dialogue, because this is a long-term process, from what I understand. And, you know, we’ve had Andrews representatives at our association meetings two or three times already, and we plan to have them again, okay, because the members want to know. They want to know what took place and how successful actually it’s been.

[Narrator] WHEN THE REPORT IS RELEASED, SITE MANAGERS MAY HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS TO EXPLAIN THE REPORT’S FINDINGS.

[Siegel] Community members not only need to give input to the process, but they need to know the results. In my community, a five-year review actually led to new cleanup questions and new cleanup technologies. And if you don’t know what the review has found, you don’t know what’s going to come next.

[Narrator] TO FIND OUT WHAT’S NEXT AT A SITE NEAR YOU, CONTACT YOUR SITE’S PROJECT MANAGER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FIVE-YEAR REVIEWS, VISIT THE EPA FIVE-YEAR REVIEW WEBSITE.

[music]