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Title 40 —Protection of Environment

Chapter I —Environmental Protection Agency

Subchapter J —Superfund, Emergency Planning, and Community Right-to-Know Programs

Part 312 Innocent Landowners, Standards for Conducting All Appropriate Inquiries

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PART 312—INNOCENT LANDOWNERS, STANDARDS FOR CONDUCTING ALL APPROPRIATE INQUIRIES

Authority: Section 101(35)(B) of CERCLA, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 9601(35)(B).

Source: 70 FR 66107, Nov. 1, 2005, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Introduction

§ 312.1 Purpose, applicability, scope and disclosure obligations.

- (a) **Purpose.** The purpose of this section is to provide standards and practices for “all appropriate inquiries” for the purposes of CERCLA sections 101(35)(B)(i)(I) and 101(35)(B)(ii) and (iii).

(b) **Applicability.** The requirements of this part are applicable to:

(1) Persons seeking to establish:

- (i) The innocent landowner defense pursuant to CERCLA sections 101(35) and 107(b)(3);
- (ii) The bona fide prospective purchaser liability protection pursuant to CERCLA sections 101(40) and 107(r);
- (iii) The contiguous property owner liability protection pursuant to CERCLA section 107(q); and

(2) persons conducting site characterization and assessments with the use of a grant awarded under CERCLA section 104(k)(2)(B).

(c) **Scope.**

(1) Persons seeking to establish one of the liability protections under paragraph (b)(1) of this section must conduct investigations as required in this part, including an inquiry by an environmental professional, as required under § 312.21, and the additional inquiries defined in § 312.22, to identify conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases, as defined in CERCLA section 101(22), of hazardous substances, as defined in CERCLA section 101(14).

(2) Persons identified in paragraph (b)(2) of this section must conduct investigations required in this part, including an inquiry by an environmental professional, as required under § 312.21, and the additional inquiries defined in § 312.22, to identify conditions indicative of releases and threatened releases of hazardous substances, as defined in CERCLA section 101(22), and as applicable per the terms and conditions of the grant or cooperative agreement, releases and threatened releases of:

- (i) Pollutants and contaminants, as defined in CERCLA section 101(33);
- (ii) Petroleum or petroleum products excluded from the definition of “hazardous substance” as defined in CERCLA section 101(14); and
- (iii) Controlled substances, as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802.

(d) **Disclosure obligations.** None of the requirements of this part limits or expands disclosure obligations under any federal, state, tribal, or local law, including the requirements under CERCLA sections 101(40)(c) and 107(q)(1)(A)(vii) requiring persons, including environmental professionals, to provide all legally required notices with respect to the discovery of releases of hazardous substances. It is the obligation of each person, including environmental professionals, conducting the inquiry to determine his or her respective disclosure obligations under federal, state, tribal, and local law and to comply with such disclosure requirements.

Subpart B—Definitions and References

§ 312.10 Definitions.

(a) Terms used in this part and not defined below, but defined in either CERCLA or 40 CFR part 300 (the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan) shall have the definitions provided in CERCLA or 40 CFR part 300.

(b) When used in this part, the following terms have the meanings provided as follows:

Abandoned property means: property that can be presumed to be deserted, or an intent to relinquish possession or control can be inferred from the general disrepair or lack of activity thereon such that a reasonable person could believe that there was an intent on the part of the current owner to surrender rights to the property.

Adjoining properties means: any real property or properties the border of which is (are) shared in part or in whole with that of the subject property, or that would be shared in part or in whole with that of the subject property but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating the properties.

Data gap means: a lack of or inability to obtain information required by the standards and practices listed in subpart C of this part despite good faith efforts by the environmental professional or persons identified under § 312.1(b), as appropriate, to gather such information pursuant to §§ 312.20(e)(1) and 312.20(e)(2).

Date of acquisition or purchase date means: the date on which a person acquires title to the property.

Environmental Professional means:

- (1) a person who possesses sufficient specific education, training, and experience necessary to exercise professional judgment to develop opinions and conclusions regarding conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases (see § 312.1(c)) on, at, in, or to a property, sufficient to meet the objectives and performance factors in § 312.20(e) and (f).
- (2) Such a person must:
 - (i) Hold a current Professional Engineer's or Professional Geologist's license or registration from a state, tribe, or U.S. territory (or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) and have the equivalent of three (3) years of full-time relevant experience; or
 - (ii) Be licensed or certified by the federal government, a state, tribe, or U.S. territory (or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) to perform environmental inquiries as defined in § 312.21 and have the equivalent of three (3) years of full-time relevant experience; or
 - (iii) Have a Baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher education in a discipline of engineering or science and the equivalent of five (5) years of full-time relevant experience; or
 - (iv) Have the equivalent of ten (10) years of full-time relevant experience.
- (3) An environmental professional should remain current in his or her field through participation in continuing education or other activities.
- (4) The definition of environmental professional provided above does not preempt state professional licensing or registration requirements such as those for a professional geologist, engineer, or site remediation professional. Before commencing work, a person should determine the applicability of state professional licensing or registration laws to the activities to be undertaken as part of the inquiry identified in § 312.21(b).
- (5) A person who does not qualify as an environmental professional under the foregoing definition may assist in the conduct of all appropriate inquiries in accordance with this part if such person is under the supervision or responsible charge of a person meeting the definition of an environmental professional provided above when conducting such activities.

Relevant experience, as used in the definition of environmental professional in this section, means: participation in the performance of all appropriate inquiries investigations, environmental site assessments, or other site investigations that may include environmental analyses, investigations, and remediation which involve the understanding of surface and subsurface environmental conditions and the processes used to evaluate these conditions and for which professional judgment was used to develop opinions regarding conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases (see § 312.1(c)) to the subject property.

Good faith means: the absence of any intention to seek an unfair advantage or to defraud another party; an honest and sincere intention to fulfill one's obligations in the conduct or transaction concerned.

Institutional controls means: non-engineered instruments, such as administrative and/or legal controls, that help to minimize the potential for human exposure to contamination and/or protect the integrity of a remedy.

§ 312.11 References.

The following industry standards may be used to comply with the requirements set forth in §§ 312.23 through 312.31:

- (a) The procedures of ASTM International Standard E1527-21 entitled "Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process." This standard is available from ASTM International at www.astm.org, 1-610-832-9585.
- (b) The procedures of ASTM International Standard E2247-23 entitled "Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process for Forestland and Rural Property." This standard is available from ASTM International at www.astm.org, 1-610-832-9585.
- (c) Until February 13, 2024, the procedures of ASTM International Standard E1527-13 entitled "Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process." This standard is available from ASTM International at www.astm.org, 1-610-832-9585.
- (d) Until June 24, 2025, the procedures of ASTM International Standard E2247-16 entitled "Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessment Process for Forestland and Rural Property." This standard is available from ASTM International at www.astm.org, 1-610-832-9585.

[70 FR 66107, Nov. 1, 2005, as amended at 73 FR 78655, Dec. 23, 2008; 78 FR 79324, Dec. 30, 2013; 79 FR 60090, Oct. 6, 2014; 82 FR 43312, Sept. 15, 2017; 87 FR 76581, Dec. 15, 2022; 89 FR 52389, June 24, 2024]

Subpart C—Standards and Practices

§ 312.20 All appropriate inquiries.

- (a) "All appropriate inquiries" pursuant to CERCLA section 101(35)(B) must be conducted within one year prior to the date of acquisition of the subject property and must include:
 - (1) An inquiry by an environmental professional (as defined in § 312.10), as provided in § 312.21;
 - (2) The collection of information pursuant to § 312.22 by persons identified under § 312.1(b); and
 - (3) Searches for recorded environmental cleanup liens, as required in § 312.25.
- (b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a) of this section, the following components of the all appropriate inquiries must be conducted or updated within 180 days of and prior to the date of acquisition of the subject property:

- (1) Interviews with past and present owners, operators, and occupants (see § 312.23);
 - (2) Searches for recorded environmental cleanup liens (see § 312.25);
 - (3) Reviews of federal, tribal, state, and local government records (see § 312.26);
 - (4) Visual inspections of the facility and of adjoining properties (see § 312.27); and
 - (5) The declaration by the environmental professional (see § 312.21(d)).
- (c) All appropriate inquiries may include the results of and information contained in an inquiry previously conducted by, or on the behalf of, persons identified under § 312.1(b) and who are responsible for the inquiries for the subject property, provided:
- (1) Such information was collected during the conduct of all appropriate inquiries in compliance with the requirements of CERCLA sections 101(35)(B), 101(40)(B) and 107(q)(A)(viii);
 - (2) Such information was collected or updated within one year prior to the date of acquisition of the subject property;
 - (3) Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the following components of the inquiries were conducted or updated within 180 days of and prior to the date of acquisition of the subject property:
 - (i) Interviews with past and present owners, operators, and occupants (see § 312.23);
 - (ii) Searches for recorded environmental cleanup liens (see § 312.25);
 - (iii) Reviews of federal, tribal, state, and local government records (see § 312.26);
 - (iv) Visual inspections of the facility and of adjoining properties (see § 312.27); and
 - (v) The declaration by the environmental professional (see § 312.21(d)).
 - (4) Previously collected information is updated to include relevant changes in the conditions of the property and specialized knowledge, as outlined in § 312.28, of the persons conducting the all appropriate inquiries for the subject property, including persons identified in § 312.1(b) and the environmental professional, defined in § 312.10.
- (d) All appropriate inquiries can include the results of report(s) specified in § 312.21(c), that have been prepared by or for other persons, provided that:
- (1) The report(s) meets the objectives and performance factors of this regulation, as specified in paragraphs (e) and (f) of this section; and
 - (2) The person specified in § 312.1(b) and seeking to use the previously collected information reviews the information and conducts the additional inquiries pursuant to §§ 312.28, 312.29 and 312.30 and the all appropriate inquiries are updated in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, as necessary.
- (e) **Objectives.** The standards and practices set forth in this part for All Appropriate Inquiries are intended to result in the identification of conditions indicative of releases and threatened releases of hazardous substances on, at, in, or to the subject property.
- (1) In performing the all appropriate inquiries, as defined in this section and provided in the standards and practices set forth this subpart, the persons identified under § 312.1(b)(1) and the environmental professional, as defined in § 312.10, must seek to identify through the conduct of the standards and practices set forth in this subpart, the following types of information about the subject property:

- (i) Current and past property uses and occupancies;
- (ii) Current and past uses of hazardous substances;
- (iii) Waste management and disposal activities that could have caused releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances;
- (iv) Current and past corrective actions and response activities undertaken to address past and on-going releases of hazardous substances;
- (v) Engineering controls;
- (vi) Institutional controls; and
- (vii) Properties adjoining or located nearby the subject property that have environmental conditions that could have resulted in conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances to the subject property.

(2) In the case of persons identified in § 312.1(b)(2), the standards and practices for All Appropriate Inquiries set forth in this part are intended to result in the identification of conditions indicative of releases and threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802) on, at, in, or to the subject property. In performing the all appropriate inquiries, as defined in this section and provided in the standards and practices set forth in this subpart, the persons identified under § 312.1(b) and the environmental professional, as defined in § 312.10, must seek to identify through the conduct of the standards and practices set forth in this subpart, the following types of information about the subject property:

- (i) Current and past property uses and occupancies;
- (ii) Current and past uses of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802);
- (iii) Waste management and disposal activities;
- (iv) Current and past corrective actions and response activities undertaken to address past and on-going releases of hazardous substances pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802);
- (v) Engineering controls;
- (vi) Institutional controls; and
- (vii) Properties adjoining or located nearby the subject property that have environmental conditions that could have resulted in conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802) to the subject property.

(f) **Performance factors.** In performing each of the standards and practices set forth in this subpart and to meet the objectives stated in paragraph (e) of this section, the persons identified under § 312.1(b) or the environmental professional as defined in § 312.10 (as appropriate to the particular standard and practice) must seek to:

- (1) Gather the information that is required for each standard and practice listed in this subpart that is publicly available, obtainable from its source within reasonable time and cost constraints, and which can practicably be reviewed; and
 - (2) Review and evaluate the thoroughness and reliability of the information gathered in complying with each standard and practice listed in this subpart taking into account information gathered in the course of complying with the other standards and practices of this subpart.
- (g) To the extent there are data gaps (as defined in § 312.10) in the information developed as part of the inquiries in paragraph (e) of this section that affect the ability of persons (including the environmental professional) conducting the all appropriate inquiries to identify conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases in each area of inquiry under each standard and practice such persons should identify such data gaps, identify the sources of information consulted to address such data gaps, and comment upon the significance of such data gaps with regard to the ability to identify conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances [and in the case of persons identified in § 312.1(b)(2), hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802)] on, at, in, or to the subject property. Sampling and analysis may be conducted to develop information to address data gaps.
- (h) Releases and threatened releases identified as part of the all appropriate inquiries should be noted in the report of the inquiries. These standards and practices however are not intended to require the identification in the written report prepared pursuant to § 312.21(c) of quantities or amounts, either individually or in the aggregate, of hazardous substances pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802) that because of said quantities and amounts, generally would not pose a threat to human health or the environment.

§ 312.21 Results of inquiry by an environmental professional.

- (a) Persons identified under § 312.1(b) must undertake an inquiry, as defined in paragraph (b) of this section, by an environmental professional, or conducted under the supervision or responsible charge of, an environmental professional, as defined in § 312.10. Such inquiry is hereafter referred to as “the inquiry of the environmental professional.”
- (b) The inquiry of the environmental professional must include the requirements set forth in §§ 312.23 (interviews with past and present owners * * *), 312.24 (reviews of historical sources * * *), 312.26 (reviews of government records), 312.27 (visual inspections), 312.30 (commonly known or reasonably ascertainable information), and 312.31 (degree of obviousness of the presence * * * and the ability to detect the contamination * * *). In addition, the inquiry should take into account information provided to the environmental professional as a result of the additional inquiries conducted by persons identified in § 312.1(b) and in accordance with the requirements of § 312.22.
- (c) The results of the inquiry by an environmental professional must be documented in a written report that, at a minimum, includes the following:
- (1) An opinion as to whether the inquiry has identified conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances [and in the case of inquiries conducted for persons identified in § 312.1(b)(2) conditions indicative of releases and threatened releases of pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802)] on, at, in, or to the subject property;

- (2) An identification of data gaps (as defined in § 312.10) in the information developed as part of the inquiry that affect the ability of the environmental professional to identify conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances [and in the case of inquiries conducted for persons identified in § 312.1(b)(2) conditions indicative of releases and threatened releases of pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802)] on, at, in, or to the subject property and comments regarding the significance of such data gaps on the environmental professional's ability to provide an opinion as to whether the inquiry has identified conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases on, at, in, or to the subject property. If there are data gaps such that the environmental professional cannot reach an opinion regarding the identification of conditions indicative of releases and threatened releases, such data gaps must be noted in the environmental professional's opinion in paragraph (c)(1) of this section; and
- (3) The qualifications of the environmental professional(s).
- (d) The environmental professional must place the following statements in the written document identified in paragraph (c) of this section and sign the document:

"[I, We] declare that, to the best of [my, our] professional knowledge and belief, [I, we] meet the definition of Environmental Professional as defined in § 312.10 of this part."

"[I, We] have the specific qualifications based on education, training, and experience to assess a property of the nature, history, and setting of the subject property. [I, We] have developed and performed the all appropriate inquiries in conformance with the standards and practices set forth in 40 CFR Part 312."

§ 312.22 Additional inquiries.

- (a) Persons identified under § 312.1(b) must conduct the inquiries listed in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(4) below and may provide the information associated with such inquiries to the environmental professional responsible for conducting the activities listed in § 312.21:
 - (1) As required by § 312.25 and if not otherwise obtained by the environmental professional, environmental cleanup liens against the subject property that are filed or recorded under federal, tribal, state, or local law;
 - (2) As required by § 312.28, specialized knowledge or experience of the person identified in § 312.1(b);
 - (3) As required by § 312.29, the relationship of the purchase price to the fair market value of the subject property, if the property was not contaminated; and
 - (4) As required by § 312.30, and if not otherwise obtained by the environmental professional, commonly known or reasonably ascertainable information about the subject property.

§ 312.23 Interviews with past and present owners, operators, and occupants.

- (a) Interviews with owners, operators, and occupants of the subject property must be conducted for the purposes of achieving the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f).
- (b) The inquiry of the environmental professional must include interviewing the current owner and occupant of the subject property. If the property has multiple occupants, the inquiry of the environmental professional shall include interviewing major occupants, as well as those occupants likely to use, store,

treat, handle or dispose of hazardous substances [and in the case of inquiries conducted for persons identified in § 312.1(b)(2) pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances (as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802)], or those who have likely done so in the past.

- (c) The inquiry of the environmental professional also must include, to the extent necessary to achieve the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f), interviewing one or more of the following persons:
 - (1) Current and past facility managers with relevant knowledge of uses and physical characteristics of the property;
 - (2) Past owners, occupants, or operators of the subject property; or
 - (3) Employees of current and past occupants of the subject property.
- (d) In the case of inquiries conducted at “abandoned properties,” as defined in § 312.10, where there is evidence of potential unauthorized uses of the subject property or evidence of uncontrolled access to the subject property, the environmental professional's inquiry must include interviewing one or more (as necessary) owners or occupants of neighboring or nearby properties from which it appears possible to have observed uses of, or releases at, such abandoned properties for the purpose of gathering information necessary to achieve the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f).

§ 312.24 Reviews of historical sources of information.

- (a) Historical documents and records must be reviewed for the purposes of achieving the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f). Historical documents and records may include, but are not limited to, aerial photographs, fire insurance maps, building department records, chain of title documents, and land use records.
- (b) Historical documents and records reviewed must cover a period of time as far back in the history of the subject property as it can be shown that the property contained structures or from the time the property was first used for residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, or governmental purposes. For the purpose of achieving the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f), the environmental professional may exercise professional judgment in context of the facts available at the time of the inquiry as to how far back in time it is necessary to search historical records.

§ 312.25 Searches for recorded environmental cleanup liens.

- (a) All appropriate inquiries must include a search for the existence of environmental cleanup liens against the subject property that are filed or recorded under federal, tribal, state, or local law.
- (b) All information collected regarding the existence of such environmental cleanup liens associated with the subject property by persons to whom this part is applicable per § 312.1(b) and not by an environmental professional, may be provided to the environmental professional or retained by the applicable party.

§ 312.26 Reviews of Federal, State, Tribal, and local government records.

- (a) Federal, tribal, state, and local government records or data bases of government records of the subject property and adjoining properties must be reviewed for the purposes of achieving the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f).
- (b) With regard to the subject property, the review of federal, tribal, and state government records or data bases of such government records and local government records and data bases of such records should include:

- (1) Records of reported releases or threatened releases, including site investigation reports for the subject property;
 - (2) Records of activities, conditions, or incidents likely to cause or contribute to releases or threatened releases as defined in § 312.1(c), including landfill and other disposal unit location records and permits, storage tank records and permits, hazardous waste handler and generator records and permits, federal, tribal and state government listings of sites identified as priority cleanup sites, and spill reporting records;
 - (3) CERCLIS records;
 - (4) Public health records;
 - (5) Emergency Response Notification System records;
 - (6) Registries or publicly available lists of engineering controls; and
 - (7) Registries or publicly available lists of institutional controls, including environmental land use restrictions, applicable to the subject property.
- (c) With regard to nearby or adjoining properties, the review of federal, tribal, state, and local government records or databases of government records should include the identification of the following:
- (1) Properties for which there are government records of reported releases or threatened releases. Such records or databases containing such records and the associated distances from the subject property for which such information should be searched include the following:
 - (i) Records of NPL sites or tribal- and state-equivalent sites (one mile);
 - (ii) RCRA facilities subject to corrective action (one mile);
 - (iii) Records of federally-registered, or state-permitted or registered, hazardous waste sites identified for investigation or remediation, such as sites enrolled in state and tribal voluntary cleanup programs and tribal- and state-listed brownfields sites (one-half mile);
 - (iv) Records of leaking underground storage tanks (one-half mile); and
 - (2) Properties that previously were identified or regulated by a government entity due to environmental concerns at the property. Such records or databases containing such records and the associated distances from the subject property for which such information should be searched include the following:
 - (i) Records of delisted NPL sites (one-half mile);
 - (ii) Registries or publicly available lists of engineering controls (one-half mile); and
 - (iii) Records of former CERCLIS sites with no further remedial action notices (one-half mile).
 - (3) Properties for which there are records of federally-permitted, tribal-permitted or registered, or state-permitted or registered waste management activities. Such records or data bases that may contain such records include the following:
 - (i) Records of RCRA small quantity and large quantity generators (adjoining properties);
 - (ii) Records of federally-permitted, tribal-permitted, or state-permitted (or registered) landfills and solid waste management facilities (one-half mile); and

(iii) Records of registered storage tanks (adjoining property).

(4) A review of additional government records with regard to sites identified under paragraphs (c)(1) through (c)(3) of this section may be necessary in the judgment of the environmental professional for the purpose of achieving the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f).

(d) The search distance from the subject property boundary for reviewing government records or databases of government records listed in paragraph (c) of this section may be modified based upon the professional judgment of the environmental professional. The rationale for such modifications must be documented by the environmental professional. The environmental professional may consider one or more of the following factors in determining an alternate appropriate search distance:

(1) The nature and extent of a release;

(2) Geologic, hydrogeologic, or topographic conditions of the subject property and surrounding environment;

(3) Land use or development densities;

(4) The property type;

(5) Existing or past uses of surrounding properties;

(6) Potential migration pathways (e.g., groundwater flow direction, prevalent wind direction); or

(7) Other relevant factors.

§ 312.27 Visual inspections of the facility and of adjoining properties.

(a) For the purpose of achieving the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f), the inquiry of the environmental professional must include:

(1) A visual on-site inspection of the subject property and facilities and improvements on the subject property, including a visual inspection of the areas where hazardous substances may be or may have been used, stored, treated, handled, or disposed. Physical limitations to the visual inspection must be noted.

(2) A visual inspection of adjoining properties, from the subject property line, public rights-of-way, or other vantage point (e.g., aerial photography), including a visual inspection of areas where hazardous substances may be or may have been stored, treated, handled or disposed. Physical limitations to the inspection of adjacent properties must be noted.

(b) Persons conducting site characterization and assessments using a grant awarded under CERCLA section 104(k)(2)(B) must include in the inquiries referenced in § 312.27(a) visual inspections of areas where hazardous substances, and may include, as applicable per the terms and conditions of the grant or cooperative agreement, pollutants and contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, and controlled substances as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802 may be or may have been used, stored, treated, handled or disposed at the subject property and adjoining properties.

(c) Except as noted in this subsection, a visual on-site inspection of the subject property must be conducted. In the unusual circumstance where an on-site visual inspection of the subject property cannot be performed because of physical limitations, remote and inaccessible location, or other inability to obtain access to the property, provided good faith (as defined in § 312.10) efforts have been taken to obtain

such access, an on-site inspection will not be required. The mere refusal of a voluntary seller to provide access to the subject property does not constitute an unusual circumstance. In such unusual circumstances, the inquiry of the environmental professional must include:

- (1) Visually inspecting the subject property via another method (such as aerial imagery for large properties), or visually inspecting the subject property from the nearest accessible vantage point (such as the property line or public road for small properties);
- (2) Documentation of efforts undertaken to obtain access and an explanation of why such efforts were unsuccessful; and
- (3) Documentation of other sources of information regarding releases or threatened releases at the subject property that were consulted in accordance with § 312.20(e). Such documentation should include comments by the environmental professional on the significance of the failure to conduct a visual on-site inspection of the subject property with regard to the ability to identify conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases on, at, in, or to the subject property, if any.

§ 312.28 Specialized knowledge or experience on the part of the defendant.

- (a) Persons to whom this part is applicable per § 312.1(b) must take into account, their specialized knowledge of the subject property, the area surrounding the subject property, the conditions of adjoining properties, and any other experience relevant to the inquiry, for the purpose of identifying conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases at the subject property, as defined in § 312.1(c).
- (b) All appropriate inquiries, as outlined in § 312.20, are not complete unless the results of the inquiries take into account the relevant and applicable specialized knowledge and experience of the persons responsible for undertaking the inquiry (as described in § 312.1(b)).

§ 312.29 The relationship of the purchase price to the value of the property, if the property was not contaminated.

- (a) Persons to whom this part is applicable per § 312.1(b) must consider whether the purchase price of the subject property reasonably reflects the fair market value of the property, if the property were not contaminated.
- (b) Persons who conclude that the purchase price of the subject property does not reasonably reflect the fair market value of that property, if the property were not contaminated, must consider whether or not the differential in purchase price and fair market value is due to the presence of releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances.
- (c) Persons conducting site characterization and assessments with the use of a grant awarded under CERCLA section 104(k)(2)(B) and who know that the purchase price of the subject property does not reasonably reflect the fair market value of that property, if the property were not contaminated, must consider whether or not the differential in purchase price and fair market value is due to the presence of releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, petroleum and petroleum products, or controlled substances as defined in 21 U.S.C. 802.

§ 312.30 Commonly known or reasonably ascertainable information about the property.

- (a) Throughout the inquiries, persons to whom this part is applicable per § 312.1(b) and environmental professionals conducting the inquiry must take into account commonly known or reasonably ascertainable information within the local community about the subject property and consider such information when seeking to identify conditions indicative of releases or threatened releases, as set forth in § 312.1(c), at the subject property.
- (b) Commonly known information may include information obtained by the person to whom this part applies in § 312.1(b) or by the environmental professional about releases or threatened releases at the subject property that is incidental to the information obtained during the inquiry of the environmental professional.
- (c) To the extent necessary to achieve the objectives and performance factors of § 312.20(e) and (f), persons to whom this part is applicable per § 312.1(b) and the environmental professional must gather information from varied sources whose input either individually or taken together may provide commonly known or reasonably ascertainable information about the subject property; the environmental professional may refer to one or more of the following sources of information:
 - (1) Current owners or occupants of neighboring properties or properties adjacent to the subject property;
 - (2) Local and state government officials who may have knowledge of, or information related to, the subject property;
 - (3) Others with knowledge of the subject property; and
 - (4) Other sources of information (e.g., newspapers, Web sites, community organizations, local libraries and historical societies).

§ 312.31 The degree of obviousness of the presence or likely presence of contamination at the property, and the ability to detect the contamination by appropriate investigation.

- (a) Persons to whom this part is applicable per § 312.1(b) and environmental professionals conducting an inquiry of a property on behalf of such persons must take into account the information collected under § 312.23 through 312.30 in considering the degree of obviousness of the presence of releases or threatened releases at the subject property.
- (b) Persons to whom this part is applicable per § 312.1(b) and environmental professionals conducting an inquiry of a property on behalf of such persons must take into account the information collected under § 312.23 through 312.30 in considering the ability to detect contamination by appropriate investigation. The inquiry of the environmental professional should include an opinion regarding additional appropriate investigation, if any.