

# Federal Environmental Laws and Regulations That Govern Mining



**More than three dozen federal environmental laws and regulations cover all aspects of mining. The following list includes some of those major laws. In addition, each state has laws and regulations that mining companies must follow.**

- **National Environmental Policy Act** - requires an interdisciplinary approach to environmental decision making.
- **Federal Land Policy and Management Act** - prevents undue and unnecessary degradation of federal lands.
- **Clean Air Act** - sets air quality standards.
- **Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act)** - directs standards for surface water quality and controlling discharges to surface water.
- **Safe Drinking Water Act** - directs standards for quality of drinking water supplied to the public (states are primary authorities) and regulating underground injection operations.
- **Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (formerly the Solid Waste Disposal Act)** - regulates generation, storage and disposal of hazardous waste (Subtitle C; authorized state programs) and manages solid, non-hazardous waste (Subtitle D; approved state programs).
- **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act** - Imposes liability on persons responsible for releases of hazardous substances.
- **Toxic Substance Control Act** - requires regulation of chemicals that present an unreasonable risk of injury to health or environment, including an unreasonable risk to a potentially exposed or susceptible subpopulation, under the conditions of use. In addition, manufacturers (including importers) are required to report certain production and use information on chemicals in commerce over certain threshold quantities.
- **Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act** - requires reporting on certain hazardous chemicals to state and local emergency planning committees, as well as certain chemicals under the Toxics Release Inventory program.

- **Endangered Species Act** - lists threatened plants and animals; protection plans mandated.
- **Migratory Bird Treaty Act** - protects nearly all bird species.
- **Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act** - regulates coal mining operations and reclamation.
- **Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act** – directs standards for the protection of the public health, safety, and the environment from hazards associated with uranium recovery activities.

**Other laws that impact mining include:**

- the Rivers and Harbors Act,
- the Federal Mining Law,
- the National Historic Preservation Act,
- the Law Authorizing Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to Regulate Sale, Transport and Storage of Explosives, and
- the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act.