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	U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION AND ENFORCEMENT DIRECTIVES SYSTEM	Subject Number: AML-11 Transmittal Number: 402 Date: 12/14/87

Subject: Guidance for Site Evaluation Visits of State Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Projects

Approval: Joel W. Christensen **Title:** Director

1. Purpose. This directive provides guidance to field personnel of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) for conducting formal abandoned mine land (AML) reclamation site inspections and evaluations as required by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-102 to record AML reclamation accomplishments and to ensure that the States/Tribes are performing AML program activities and functions in compliance with their Reclamation Plans and their approved program of reclamation projects. It does not apply to any projects undertaken pursuant to the Federal Reclamation Programs.

2. Definitions.

   a. Formal site visit. A formal site visit is a visit made by field personnel to a State/Tribe AML site for evaluative purposes required by OMB Circular A-102.

   b. Informal site visit. An informal site visit is a visit made by any OSMRE personnel for any purpose other than evaluation.

   c. State/Tribe Reclamation Program. As used herein the State/Tribe reclamation program refers to all projects for AML reclamation administered by and/or conducted by the State/Tribe which have been approved by OSMRE and for which Federal funds have been provided through grants, cooperative agreements, or other agreements subject to OMB Circular A-102 requirements, and for which OSMRE field personnel have been given oversight responsibilities.

3. Policy/Procedures

   a. Policy. As provided for in SMCRA, States/Tribes with an approved reclamation program may implement the provisions of that program subject to monitoring and oversight by OSMRE. In accordance with Attachment I requirements of OMB Circular A-102, OSMRE will monitor the performance of and "make site visits as frequently as practicable" to State/Tribe AML reclamation sites "to review program accomplishments and management control systems."

b. Responsibilities. Field Office Directors (FOD's) are responsible for establishing a schedule of formal site visits to ensure that State/Tribe AML management control systems are evaluated and accomplishments recorded and to ensure that State/Tribe reclamation work is not needlessly disrupted by frequent visits. The Field Office (FO) should notify and, when practicable, coordinate with State/Tribe AML personnel on the timing of site visits.

There may be occasions where field personnel will need to make informal visits to State/Tribe AML sites, such as conducting officials on site visitations, requests by the State for technical assistance, etc. Official OSMRE site evaluation visits are formal and subject to the procedures set forth within this directive.

The FOD must consider a variety of factors in establishing the number and timing of formal site visits. In some circumstances few if any site visits may be necessary because of the nature of the project. For example, a visit to every project site under a specific grant would not be required if many of the projects are very similar such as the reclamation of an open shaft. On the other hand, multiple site visits may be required on a complex reclamation project. The timing of formal site visits should be established according to needs. The FOD should analyze the need for information, complexity of work being conducted during the various project phases, and the need to review program accomplishments and management control systems. For example, a subsidence project would be best visited during drilling or backfilling activities rather than after the project is completed.

More frequent formal site visits also may be required where circumstances warrant, such as:

(1) Investigation of citizen concerns or complaints;

(2) Requests by the State/Tribe to review and approve project scope changes and project revisions;

(3) Unique site conditions or particularly difficult reclamation projects requiring special attention;

(4) Unique reclamation practices or special studies requiring on-site data gathering and analysis;

(5) Requests from other Federal agencies as provided by Section 713 of SMCRA.

c. Procedures. OSMRE FO's will apply the following procedures for formal visits to State/Tribe AML project sites.

Only authorized FO personnel or other personnel authorized by the FOD's or Assistant Directors, Field Operations, may make formal site visits. The States/Tribes shall be notified in advance, when practicable, of such visits so that State/Tribe personnel shall be accorded the opportunity of accompanying FO personnel during the site evaluation if they desire. While this directive does not require a minimum number of site evaluations, FO's will be guided at all times by the OMB Circular A-102 requirement of ensuring that goals set out in the OSMRE approved State/Tribe reclamation program are accomplished. For each formal evaluation visit, FO personnel shall document site conditions and observations. The evaluation types and objectives are discussed below.

1. Pre-approval Site Evaluations: A pre-approval site evaluation is one conducted prior to award of the reclamation grant. The purposes of a pre-approval site evaluation are to review proposed goals and objectives, NEPA compliance, and to otherwise ensure that any funding requests are reasonable and necessary. This requirement could be satisfied if the project site has been previously visited as a result of a citizen inquiry, inventory validation or similar program related response.

2. Construction Evaluation. A construction evaluation is a formal site visit occurring during construction to evaluate the progress of the reclamation work and whether it is being conducted in a manner that will achieve the plans and objectives of the State/Tribe that have been approved by OSMRE.

3. Final Evaluation: A final evaluation is a formal site visit conducted as soon as practicable after reclamation construction activities are completed and prior to close-out actions. The main purpose of a final evaluation is to assess the success of the project in abating the AML problem and to verify data for reporting accomplishments.

4. Reporting Requirements. None.

5. References.

a. State Reclamation Grants, 30 CFR Part 886
b. Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program, Federal Register, Vol. 45, No. 46, March 6, 1980
c. Uniform Requirements for Assistance to State and Local Governments, OMB Circular A-102 (Revised), January 1981

6. Effect on Other Documents. Supersedes policy statement in OSMRE memorandum dated December 27, 1984; Subject: Policy Statement (Frequency of AML Construction Inspection).

7. Effective Date. Upon Issuance

8. Contact. Division of Abandoned Mine Lands, (FTS: 343-8061)