

**MAKING RISK-BASED DECISIONS ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF ALASKA:
APPLICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED AT LOCATIONS WITH
UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS**

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Alaska's North Slope is characterized by unique environmental and cultural conditions. Standard risk assessment methodologies that rely on default approaches fall short in settings like the arctic with atypical patterns for contaminant migration and human and ecological populations specific to remote, cold-climate locations. When regulators and industry get "stuck" on important risk-related issues concerning operations on the North Slope, permitting and other site management decisions can languish unless outside-the-box thinking is applied. This presentation focuses on developing a consensus risk assessment process for the arctic region and lessons learned from applying this process to several active and inactive operations on the North Slope. The consensus process emerged from a working group comprised of representatives from Alaska DEC, U.S. EPA, and the regulated community. It entails prominent use of weight-of-evidence hazard evaluation to eliminate contaminants, receptors, and exposure pathways of little or no concern and focus further assessment on those of most concern. The process is oriented to making reasonable and cost-effective risk management decisions for operations in the arctic region. It can optimize collection of useful data, provide justification for alternative processes, support effective risk communication, and alleviate public concern about environmental exposure when concern is unwarranted.

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