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Quality Matters.

Why a Cheap Phase I ESA Can Cost More

As you start receiving quotes from various Phase I providers, you'll notice that some cost estimates are significantly cheaper than others. Be wary of such lowball quotes; these providers may cut corners or take a cookie-cutter approach that could come back to haunt you later. We put together this document to help you understand the difference between low cost providers and quality providers like ECG.

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A Phase I Assessment Is Not a Commodity

One of the most problematic aspects of obtaining a Phase I environmental site assessment is the issue of quality. Experienced clients have seen the wide range in report quality and have come to know the difference between a "bargain basement" Phase I and a quality Phase I.

However, in many cases the Phase I ESA product is treated as a commodity. When treated like a commodity, the underlying assumption is that the quality of Phase I ESAs is fairly consistent. When this happens, the price of the Phase I becomes the primary factor.

The quality difference is typically seen in the level of detail.

Listing Any Issue as a Problem

Bargain basement Phase I ESA reports list almost any environmental problem as a recognized environmental condition (REC). An oil stain on the floor of a facility serves as an example minor environmental concern. However, many consultants would list this observation as a REC as well as other minimal issues.



This causes problems since each REC needs to be addressed in some way. Addressing RECs identified in a Phase I ESA report often means conducting a Phase II ESA or some other additional study. So, while a client may save money upfront by obtaining a bargain basement Phase I, that client will now have to spend additional resources addressing each minor issue identified as a REC in the Phase I ESA.

The correct approach involves only listing those environmental conditions that are truly “recognized environmental conditions” as defined by the ASTM Standard for Phase I ESAs.

Closing the Loop

Often bargain basement reports do not “close the loop” on an environmental issue. In other words, an observation made at the site or the results of research indicate a potential environmental issue, but the report does not discuss the issue in enough detail. The report fails to state whether or not the condition represents a REC, a minor concern or a business environmental concern. This leaves the client and the reviewer (e.g. lender) unsure as to how to proceed. Also, this approach often results in additional work and fees for the consultant when they are asked to do whatever is necessary to close the loop.

The correct approach involves a summary of each environmental issue identified in the report. A quality report will go into detail about each particular environmental issue and then will state whether that issue represents a REC or not. Reasons and explanations are provided for those conclusions.

Beyond the Minimum

Other differences between a bargain basement Phase I and a quality Phase I go beyond the written report.

For example, upon completion of a Phase I or Phase II, a good consultant will contact the client to discuss the results. This gives the client a head start, prior to receiving the written report, in determining how to handle environmental issues at the site, if necessary.



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Another important consideration when choosing a Phase I ESA provider is their ability to conduct Phase II ESAs. Phase II ESAs typically involve the collection of soil and/or groundwater samples and submitting those samples for analysis. The data collected must be interpreted and a technical report is drafted. Often, many bargain basement Phase I providers do not have the ability to conduct Phase II ESAs. Low-cost providers often don't do a very good job of performing any other environmental studies beyond the Phase I level.

In summary, clients should avoid looking at Phase I ESAs as a commodity product. Experienced Phase I clients have learned to use consulting firms with experienced field personnel and experienced project managers.

Next Step: Call In the Experts

We hope you feel more informed after reading this document. Now, let the experts at ECG take care of your asbestos issues.

Call us at (866) 726-9485 or contact us through our website at www.ecgmidwest.com for a FREE estimate and proposal.