

Overview of the Environmental Assessment Study Process that Applies to the Siting and Design of Some New Industrial Facilities (January 18, 2018)

The siting and design of some new industrial facilities are subject to an environmental assessment (EA) study. Noront Resources has committed to undertake such an EA process. Following the completion of the EA study process, project design is initiated and technical approvals are sought, leading to tendering for construction.

Responses to the following seven questions provide an overview of a typical EA study process. Noront Resources will develop their EA study to reflect its project specifics.

1. What is included in the EA study?

The key steps of the EA study process are:

- A description of the proposed project;
- A description of the existing environmental conditions;
- Consideration of project alternatives, including their advantages and disadvantages;
- Identification of potential environmental impacts;
- Development of mitigation measures to avoid or reduce environmental impacts;
- Recommendations for follow-up monitoring;
- Consultation with Indigenous communities, public, city and agencies, during the study;
- Development of an EA report that documents the above; and
- Review of the EA report by government agencies and their approval or refusal decision.

2. What environmental topics are considered in the EA study?

Some of the topics in the EA study process are:

- Meteorology and air quality;
- Noise, vibration and light;
- Geology, hydrology and geochemistry;
- Terrestrial vegetation, wildlife and soil;
- Aquatic environment, water and sediment quality; and
- Human impacts.

3. How are these environmental topics considered during the EA study?

Environmental technical specialists:

- Undertake background studies and field investigations of existing environmental conditions;
- Identify sensitivities and constraints to be addressed in the development and assessment of alternatives;
- Identify and assess potential impacts;
- Participate in the development of mitigation for those impacts; and
- Prepare technical documentation of the above.

4. Who is consulted during the EA study?

Study consultation is expected to involve the following:

- Indigenous communities;
- General public;
- The host municipality; and
- Regulatory agencies.

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5. Why does this consultation occur during the EA study?

Consultation is undertaken during the EA study to:

- Provide and receive project information;
- Receive input and concerns from interested stakeholders; and
- Provide the basis for the study team to provide responses to such input and concerns.

6. What does consultation during the EA study include?

The consultation process continues throughout the EA study process and provides the opportunities for feedback on all of the components of the EA.

Key steps in the consultation process are:

- Public notices to announce study commencement;
- Release of technical reports for information and review;
- Open houses and presentations at project milestones to provide and receive information and to discuss any project-related concerns;
- Submission of the EA report documenting the EA study to the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, along with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, for review;
- Public notices to announce EA report submission and the opportunity for public review and comment; and
- Government approval or refusal decision after comments are received from stakeholders and adequately addressed.

Public consultation does not end with an approval decision from the federal and provincial governments. It continues during the next stages of project design and processing of associated technical approvals.

7. What are the next steps after the EA study process? When can construction start and how long does it take?

The duration of the EA study process and approval varies with the nature of the industrial facility, project complexity and site specifics, but it typically takes several years,

If EA approval is granted, the project proceeds to a more detailed level of design, which can also take several years. During this follow-up design process:

- Associated technical studies are undertaken. Examples are noise and air emissions.
- Applications for technical approvals are made, For example:
 - The municipality is requested to provide site approvals and issue building permits; and
 - The Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is requested to issue an Environmental Compliance Approval (ECA), which in essence is a license issued to allow operation of the plant.

The duration of construction, including tendering, varies with the industrial facility, but it can easily take a couple of years after a shovel goes in the ground.