

NEHA Hazardous Waste Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



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SAMPLE

Questions

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- 1. What is a common challenge associated with bioremediation?**
 - A. Finding appropriate disposal sites**
 - B. Ensuring the right organisms are used for the contaminants present**
 - C. Creating hazardous waste for treatment**
 - D. Regulating the treatment process**
- 2. Neutralization and detoxification are feasible with most of the organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, but not with which type?**
 - A. Chlorinated hydrocarbons**
 - B. Acids**
 - C. Bases**
 - D. All of the above**
- 3. What is required of facilities that store more than 1,320 gallons of oil?**
 - A. They must prepare and implement a Hazardous Waste Management Plan**
 - B. They must prepare and implement a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan**
 - C. They must report to the National Response Center**
 - D. They must switch to renewable energy sources**
- 4. What constitutes "reactive waste"?**
 - A. Waste that can be easily recycled**
 - B. Waste that reacts violently with water**
 - C. Waste that is non-toxic**
 - D. Waste that can be safely incinerated**
- 5. What is the role of a "state hazardous waste program"?**
 - A. To standardize hazardous waste regulations across all states**
 - B. To provide federal funding for hazardous waste research**
 - C. To implement regulations that may be stricter than federal standards**
 - D. To facilitate international hazardous waste disposal agreements**

- 6. A well-designed contingency plan helps with what during emergencies?**
- A. Meeting financial goals**
 - B. Establishing marketing strategies**
 - C. Immediate response procedures**
 - D. Reduction of legal liabilities**
- 7. Does the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) regulate hazardous releases from sites operating prior to November 1980?**
- A. True**
 - B. False**
- 8. What report must large quantity generators submit?**
- A. A quarterly inspection report of their facilities**
 - B. A biennial report detailing their hazardous waste management practices**
 - C. An annual report on employee training**
 - D. A monthly update on storage conditions**
- 9. What does the term "RCRA" stand for?**
- A. Resource Conservation and Recycling Act**
 - B. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act**
 - C. Regulation of Chemical Response Act**
 - D. Regulation of Contaminated Resources Act**
- 10. What is an encapsulation method?**
- A. A method for recycling hazardous waste efficiently**
 - B. A method for treating hazardous waste by sealing it in protective material**
 - C. A method for completely destroying hazardous waste**
 - D. A method for neutralizing hazardous chemicals through chemical reactions**

Answers

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1. B
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. C
6. C
7. A
8. B
9. B
10. B

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Explanations

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1. What is a common challenge associated with bioremediation?

- A. Finding appropriate disposal sites**
- B. Ensuring the right organisms are used for the contaminants present**
- C. Creating hazardous waste for treatment**
- D. Regulating the treatment process**

Bioremediation is a process that utilizes living organisms, typically microbes, to degrade and detoxify hazardous substances in the environment. One of the most significant challenges in bioremediation is ensuring that the right organisms are used for the specific contaminants present. Different organisms have varying abilities to break down specific pollutants, so identifying and employing the appropriate microbial strains is crucial to successfully remediating a site. For effective bioremediation, the microbial community must be capable of utilizing the contaminants as a carbon and energy source, which can vary widely depending on the chemical nature of the pollutants. If the wrong organisms are introduced, or if they lack the necessary metabolic pathways to degrade the targeted contaminants, the bioremediation effort could be ineffective, leading to wasted resources and potentially prolonging environmental contamination. Addressing this challenge involves thorough site assessments, detailed knowledge of microbial ecology, and sometimes engineering solutions to enhance microbial activity or introduce tailored biocatalysts. Other options present legitimate considerations in hazardous waste management but do not capture the core technical challenge inherent to bioremediation. For instance, finding appropriate disposal sites and regulating treatment processes are concerns that apply to broader hazardous waste management rather than specifically bioremediation. Furthermore, creating hazardous waste during treatment is

2. Neutralization and detoxification are feasible with most of the organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, but not with which type?

- A. Chlorinated hydrocarbons**
- B. Acids**
- C. Bases**
- D. All of the above**

Neutralization and detoxification of chemicals often involve chemical reactions that render the substances less harmful or easier to manage. In the case of insecticides, organophosphate and carbamate types can frequently be neutralized or detoxified due to their chemical structures and properties. However, chlorinated hydrocarbons, which are represented in the correct answer, are generally much more stable and persistent in the environment. They do not readily undergo the same chemical transformations that allow for successful detoxification or neutralization like their organophosphate and carbamate counterparts. Because of their stable chlorine-carbon bonds, chlorinated hydrocarbons resist chemical breakdown, making detoxification methods ineffective. This stability is a significant factor in their environmental persistence and potential buildup in ecosystems, leading to long-term ecological effects. In contrast, acids and bases, while they do present their own challenges in terms of handling and neutralization, can often be managed through established methods such as dilution or neutralization reactions with suitable agents. Therefore, the susceptibility of chlorinated hydrocarbons to detoxification processes is distinctly lower than that of organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, which renders this answer accurate.

3. What is required of facilities that store more than 1,320 gallons of oil?

- A. They must prepare and implement a Hazardous Waste Management Plan**
- B. They must prepare and implement a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan**
- C. They must report to the National Response Center**
- D. They must switch to renewable energy sources**

Facilities that store more than 1,320 gallons of oil are required to prepare and implement a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) plan. This requirement is established under the Clean Water Act to prevent oil spills from reaching navigable waters or adjoining shorelines. The SPCC plan outlines the measures that the facility will take to prevent spilled oil from causing harm, including routine inspections, employee training, and maintenance of equipment. It is a proactive step to protect the environment and public health, ensuring that facilities have procedures in place for spill prevention and response in the event of an oil release. While a Hazardous Waste Management Plan is essential for facilities managing hazardous waste, it does not apply specifically to the storage of oil unless the oil itself is classified as hazardous. Reporting to the National Response Center is necessary for specific incidents but is not a preventative measure linked directly to the oil storage threshold. Switching to renewable energy sources, although beneficial for environmental sustainability, is not a regulatory requirement tied to oil storage volumes.

4. What constitutes "reactive waste"?

- A. Waste that can be easily recycled**
- B. Waste that reacts violently with water**
- C. Waste that is non-toxic**
- D. Waste that can be safely incinerated**

Reactive waste is defined as waste that is chemically unstable and has the potential to react violently under certain conditions, such as in the presence of water. When such a waste comes into contact with water, it may produce toxic fumes, heat, or even result in explosions. This characteristic makes reactive waste particularly hazardous and requires special handling procedures to mitigate the risks associated with its reactivity. On the other hand, options suggesting that waste can be easily recycled, is non-toxic, or can be safely incinerated do not align with the definition of reactive waste. These options imply a level of safety and stability that is contrary to the inherently dangerous nature of reactive materials. Therefore, the most accurate representation of reactive waste is the one that highlights its violent reactions, particularly with water.

5. What is the role of a "state hazardous waste program"?

- A. To standardize hazardous waste regulations across all states**
- B. To provide federal funding for hazardous waste research**
- C. To implement regulations that may be stricter than federal standards**
- D. To facilitate international hazardous waste disposal agreements**

A state hazardous waste program primarily functions to implement regulations that can be more stringent than federal standards. This authority comes from the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), which allows states to establish their own hazardous waste programs as long as they are at least as protective as the federal program. States have the flexibility to tailor their regulations to address specific environmental concerns or conditions that may not be fully covered by federal guidelines. This capacity enables states to manage their unique waste challenges effectively and to enforce regulations that reflect local environmental priorities and public health needs. Thus, if a state identifies particular risks regarding hazardous waste that necessitate tighter controls, it can enact and enforce regulations that exceed those established at the federal level. The other options do not adequately describe the primary role of a state hazardous waste program. Standardizing regulations across all states is more aligned with federal oversight, while providing federal funding is not a function of the state programs themselves. Although some states might engage in international agreements, that responsibility is not typically a core function of local hazardous waste programs.

6. A well-designed contingency plan helps with what during emergencies?

- A. Meeting financial goals**
- B. Establishing marketing strategies**
- C. Immediate response procedures**
- D. Reduction of legal liabilities**

A well-designed contingency plan is crucial during emergencies because it provides clear and structured immediate response procedures that guide the actions of individuals and teams. When an emergency occurs, having predefined procedures helps ensure that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities, which allows for a swift and effective response. This may include evacuation protocols, communication plans, and specific actions to mitigate the impact of the emergency. Having these immediate response procedures in place minimizes confusion and chaos, ultimately leading to a more organized approach to handling crises. This is particularly important in environments dealing with hazardous waste, where quick and effective action can prevent harm to people, the environment, and property. While meeting financial goals, establishing marketing strategies, and reducing legal liabilities are important aspects of management, they do not directly address the critical need for a structured response during emergencies, which is the primary focus of an effective contingency plan.

7. Does the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) regulate hazardous releases from sites operating prior to November 1980?

A. True

B. False

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund, was enacted in 1980 and is designed to address the clean-up of hazardous substance releases. It empowers the federal government to respond to hazardous substance releases that pose a threat to public health or the environment. To understand the regulation scope under CERCLA, it's important to note that the Act does indeed apply to releases that occurred prior to its enactment. This means that sites operating before November 1980 can still be held responsible for clean-up efforts and liability if they released hazardous substances. CERCLA gives authorities the ability to track down potentially responsible parties for contamination that took place even before the law was established, reflecting the ongoing responsibility to manage and rectify environmental damages. This capacity to address historical contamination is vital for public health protection and environmental restoration, ensuring that past hazardous operations are not exempt from present-day accountability. Therefore, the assertion that CERCLA regulates hazardous releases from sites operating prior to November 1980 is accurate.

8. What report must large quantity generators submit?

A. A quarterly inspection report of their facilities

B. A biennial report detailing their hazardous waste management practices

C. An annual report on employee training

D. A monthly update on storage conditions

Large quantity generators of hazardous waste are required to submit a biennial report detailing their hazardous waste management practices. This report serves several critical functions, including helping regulatory agencies assess compliance with hazardous waste regulations and enabling effective tracking of waste generation and management. The biennial report typically includes information such as the types and quantities of hazardous waste generated, how that waste was treated, stored, or disposed of, and any efforts made to reduce waste generation. This systematic reporting is essential for maintaining environmental safety and ensuring that hazardous wastes are managed responsibly. In contrast, the other options focus on different types of reporting or inspections that may apply to various facilities or activities but are not specifically mandated for large quantity generators under hazardous waste regulations. For example, while inspections and employee training may be important aspects of hazardous waste management, they do not constitute the mandated biennial reporting requirement that pertains specifically to large quantity generators.

9. What does the term "RCRA" stand for?

- A. Resource Conservation and Recycling Act
- B. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act**
- C. Regulation of Chemical Response Act
- D. Regulation of Contaminated Resources Act

The term "RCRA" stands for the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. This important piece of legislation, enacted in 1976, is fundamental in the management and regulation of hazardous waste within the United States. The RCRA provides the framework for the proper management of hazardous and non-hazardous solid waste, aiming to protect human health and the environment from the potential dangers of waste disposal. It emphasizes the importance of waste minimization and encourages recycling and recovery of resources, thereby promoting environmental conservation. The name reflects its focus on both conserving resources through responsible management and recovering valuable materials from waste. This approach underlines the Act's dual purpose: to ensure safe waste disposal and to promote recycling as a means to conserve natural resources. Understanding this law is pivotal for professionals working with hazardous waste management, as RCRA outlines specific guidelines and regulatory requirements that facilities must follow.

10. What is an encapsulation method?

- A. A method for recycling hazardous waste efficiently
- B. A method for treating hazardous waste by sealing it in protective material**
- C. A method for completely destroying hazardous waste
- D. A method for neutralizing hazardous chemicals through chemical reactions

An encapsulation method involves treating hazardous waste by sealing it in protective material. This technique is particularly important for materials that pose a risk to human health and the environment due to their toxic nature. By encasing the hazardous waste in a stable and secure material, encapsulation minimizes the potential for leaching into the environment and reduces the risk of exposure to harmful substances. This method is often utilized when complete destruction of the hazardous waste is not feasible or when the waste still needs to be contained in a manner that limits its mobility. Encapsulation can involve the use of various materials, such as cement or specialized coatings, designed to withstand environmental factors and ensure long-term safety. Other options provided do not correctly describe different waste management methods but do not define encapsulation. Recycling focuses on the recovery of materials, destruction entails breaking down waste to eliminate it, and neutralizing involves chemical reactions to render substances less harmful. Each of these approaches has distinct objectives and application techniques within the broader context of hazardous waste management.