

Williams Environmental Cleanup

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Is the water on the Williams property safe to drink and where does it come from?

A: Drinking water at the former Williams AFB is provided by the City of Mesa water supply system and is safe to drink.

Q: How can you be sure the water is safe to drink?

A: The City of Mesa provides and tests the drinking water supply in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Additional information on the City of Mesa Water Supply is available at <http://www.mesaaz.gov/water/>.

Q: What about the soil? Is it hazardous?

A: Since the cleanup began in the 1980s, the Air Force has gathered extensive information about the locations where hazardous waste was dumped, leaked or spilled. The Air Force has employed a number of technologies at Williams to ensure to protect human health and the environment from contaminants from past activities. Many sites have been excavated and the contaminated soils have been removed. At others, such as former landfills, protective caps have been installed, and restrictions are tied to the property deed to prevent residential use, digging or other activities that might allow exposure to contaminants.

Q: Can I dig in my yard?

A: As in any community, you must first obtain permission to be sure you don't damage underground utility lines and pipelines, including those associated with the Air Force's Williams cleanup monitoring program. Contact the dig alert phone number (800-227-2600) 48 hours before digging in your yard.

Q: If I live on Williams can I plant a garden? Is it safe to grow vegetables or work in the soil?

A: It's safe to plant a garden and grow vegetables. There are no restrictions within the yards of homes built on the former base, such as yours. The only possible concern is lead from lead-based paint that was on the former military houses. However, this is no different from any other site that has or had buildings built prior to 1978.

Q: I'm curious about the piping, equipment and signs for cleanup systems I see when I drive around Williams. What is coming out of these and is it dangerous to breathe?

A: The vapors released are mostly water vapor, but may contain low concentrations of environmental contaminants. These low concentrations do not pose a significant health threat and are also released from exhaust stacks that carry the vapors away from ground level. There are no special problems associated with the air at Williams.

Q: The cleanup at Williams seems to be going on for a very long time. Why?

A: Even using the best available technology, the removal of contaminants in the soil and groundwater is a time-consuming process. The cleanup process is managed to methodically achieve cleanup while avoiding unneeded expense to taxpayers, and occurs with oversight by numerous regulatory agencies to protect human health and the environment.

Q: When did the Air Force start the cleanup and when will they be finished?

A: The Air Force began cleaning up Williams in the early 1980s and will continue with the cleanup until the job is done. Cleanup of the groundwater is the most complex project remaining at Williams. Investigations to define the extent of the contamination are nearly complete and the Air Force is studying different alternatives for successful cleanup. The Air Force anticipates having Records of Decision for the cleanup remedy in place for the groundwater contamination by the end of 2013, with the cleanup ongoing for many years after that. Landfill monitoring will extend indefinitely.

Q: Where can I get more information about the cleanup?

A: You can look on our website: www.afcec.af.mil. Then, in right-hand column, select “Base Realignment and Closure.” Choose “Williams AFB, Arizona”. To get on our mailing list, email afropa.pa@us.af.mil or phone (916) 643-6420 x257.

Q: Is my home or business affected by the ongoing cleanup operation?

A: There is no exposure to contamination at any home or business, but some homes and businesses are located close to cleanup equipment such as wells or piping.