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Cleanup will span 10 years

Firm to devise plan for NAS toxic waste

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A Tallahassee company has been contracted to determine the methods that will be used to clean up 37 hazardous waste sites, an effort that could take at least 10 years, at Pensacola Naval Air Station.

Ecology and Environment Inc. will investigate the sites within the next few weeks, said Harry White, a spokesman for NAS.

The air station was placed on the federal Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List of Superfund sites in December. Cleanup of the Department of Defense Superfund sites will be paid for with money from the Defense Environmental Restoration Account, White said.

The Navy had gathered information on each of the 37 sites that showed that waste had been dumped across the 43-acre air station as early as the mid-1800s. The dumping continued until 1975, officials said.

Research by the Navy revealed that while 20 of the sites likely are free of hazardous wastes, 17 probably contain hazardous waste, White said. Among the sites that will not need extensive cleanup are several areas where building rubble was disposed of.

Sites targeted for cleanup include areas where solvents and other byproducts of the Naval Aviation Depot and its former commands were dumped.

The investigation and cleanup of the sites is expected to take up to 10 years to complete. Emphasis will be placed on the early identification and cleanup of the sites that pose the most imminent threat to the environment, he said.

The company will begin its check of each site by sinking test wells to determine what type of wastes were dumped and to determine what method could best be used to clean up the site, White said.

Within the next few days, information on each of the cleanup sites will be available at the West Florida Regional Library, 200 W. Gregory St.; the John C. Pace Library at the University of West Florida; and the library at NAS.