

What can I expect in an inspection?

1. **Credentials:** don't expect a badge - they don't trust us with badges. We are not peace officers certified by the state. Some inspectors will wear a DNR uniform, and will look like game wardens. However, any inspector must provide, upon request, photo identification. They should also be able to provide you with a business card. If you have any reason to doubt their authenticity, call their office. That means you need to know what their office phone number is, independent of what they tell you.
2. **Inbriefing:** the inspector should sit down with you and your administrator or other people of your choice, and describe what's about to happen. If the inspector or inspectors are there because of a complaint we received, they should tell you. If they don't volunteer that information, feel free to ask. Ask about anything you don't understand.
3. **Personnel:** there will usually only be one inspector. In some cases, the inspector will bring a trainee, a mentor, or even someone from the USEPA. Occasionally, we conduct multimedia inspections. In these cases, there will be an inspector from each environmental medium for which your facility has a permit or other regulatory burden.
4. **Professionalism:** you have the right to expect to deal with a civil, knowledgeable, competent professional. This doesn't mean you won't be asked some difficult questions - make sure the person who actually knows the answers is handy. However, if you think the inspector is acting in an unprofessional manner, document it (videotape is fine), put up with it for the duration of the inspection, and then call their supervisor. Okay. Let's go for a walk.
5. **Thoroughness:** the inspector will likely want to see EVERYWHERE that you manage (generate, accumulate, store) hazardous waste or hazardous materials. Why hazardous materials? To ensure that there are no releases of something which becomes a hazardous waste when it hits the floor. The Rules allow the inspector access to virtually every square inch of the site, at any time hazardous waste management activities are going on, and to sample anything anywhere. The inspector must provide his own sampling supplies and equipment, and must provide you a split (equal portion) of the sample.
6. **Point of view:** what is the inspector looking for? While we do have inspection checklists, most veteran inspectors don't use one. Most of the provisions of the Rules are based on common sense. As in, Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. Close what you open. Use up what you can. Don't throw away anything useful. Identify things. Write down what you did. Be nice to people. Your mama doesn't work here, so clean up what you spill.
7. **Outbriefing:** at the conclusion of the inspection, the inspector should provide you a synopsis of how conditions were. You should set up the outbriefing as a conference with whoever you think needs to hear it. Many facilities try to have the director, principal, garrison commander, or some similar higher-up present. At least arrange to have the head of physical plant present. Most managers with responsibility for environmental and health and safety are interested in grabbing whatever attention they can. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
8. **Documentation:** anything you hear from the inspector is only worth the paper it's written on. WRITTEN follow-up must be sent to you in a reasonable time. "Reasonable" depends on how big your facility is, how many samples and photographs the inspector took, whether the secretary is out for the holidays, etc., but should be less than a month. You are not liable for any findings of violation which are not provided in writing.

Billy Hendricks works as an Environmental Specialist in the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division. He began inspecting government facilities in 1958 when he first toured Fort Benning in the back seat of his uncle's Mercury convertible. Born, raised, and educated in Georgia, he took a summer job with the EPD's Water Protection Branch after graduation from the University of Georgia. A year of taking water samples in Water Protection led to eight more in Air Protection, testing and monitoring industrial emission sources and ambient pollutants. Now, thirty-three years after starting that summer job, he is the senior compliance officer in EPD's Hazardous Waste Management Branch. His responsibilities include all facets of hazardous waste regulation, permit writing, compliance auditing, and enforcement for over a hundred government-owned facilities, ranging from the Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay and Georgia State University to the Gwinnett County Public Schools and the Decatur County Industrial Park.

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