Department of Toxic Substances Control

Director's Annual Priorities
Fiscal Year 2025-2026

Pursuant to Health and Safety Code 25125.2(b)(4), the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has developed Director's Annual Priorities for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (FY 25-26), which span across each of the department's programs. The Director's Priorities outline deliverables that will enhance environmental protection, reduce harm to communities, improve our engagement with the public, explore innovative science and policy initiatives.

Priority 1. Consistent, Timely, and Equitable Enforcement

DTSC continues to implement the long-term vision of strong enforcement and sustained compliance through its Enforcement Strategic Plan. DTSC is prioritizing actions to institutionalize best practices of enforcement and meet the mission of having efficient and effective enforcement throughout DTSC's programs.

Goal 1.1. Establish an Enforcement Training Program

To support a culture of consistent enforcement that compels compliance and prevent environmental harm, DTSC will establish a structured and formalized Hazardous Waste Management Program (HWMP) Enforcement Training Program for HWMP enforcement staff.

Deliverable 1.1.1. Course Format

By December 31, 2025, HWMP will determine the courses that will be required as core and refresher courses for all program enforcement levels. In addition, HWMP will determine the timing of each core and refresher course that will be required.

Deliverable 1.1.2. Develop Course Content

By June 30, 2026, HWMP will complete development of 2 self-paced course modules.

Goal 1.2. Implement the Site Mitigation and Restoration Program Enforcement Policy

In FY 24-25, DTSC drafted an Enforcement Policy for the Site Mitigation and Restoration Program (SMRP). SMRP will continue strengthening its culture of enforcement by finalizing the draft Policy, updating internal procedures and tools, and implementing the policy. Additionally, SMRP is creating project manager's desk manuals to serve as references and training documents that orient our staff to available resources as enforcement related policies and resources are updated. This will allow for more consistent and effective enforcement practices.

Deliverable 1.2.1. Finalize and Disseminate SMRP Enforcement Policy

By December 31, 2025, SMRP will complete all internal reviews and finalize the SMRP Enforcement Policy. The policy will be posted online when it is finalized.

Deliverable 1.2.2. Create Project Manager's Desk Manual

By June 30, 2026, SMRP will create a project manager's desk manual module.

Goal 1.3. Evaluate and Report on Compliance with Safer Consumer Products Regulations and Consumer Product Safety Legislation

DTSC's Safer Consumer Products (SCP) Program will continue to integrate compliance evaluation and reporting efforts into the program's activities. Staff will use market research data and laboratory product testing to verify compliance with laws designed to prevent hazardous exposures before they occur.

Deliverable 1.3.1. Toluene in Nail Products

By October 2025, DTSC will release a report documenting compliance with the listing of Toluene in Nail Products as a priority product.

Deliverable 1.3.2. Formal Information Requests

By December 2025, DTSC will initiate development of at least one Formal Information Request to assist SCP compliance and enforcement efforts.

Deliverable 1.3.3. PFAS in Treatments for Converted Textiles and Leathers

By March 2026, DTSC will release a report documenting compliance with the listing of Treatments Containing Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) for Use on Converted Textiles or Leathers as a priority product.

Deliverable 1.3.4. Motor Vehicle Brake Friction Material Law

By June 2026, provide an update on manufacturer compliance with the 2010 California Motor Vehicle Brake Friction Material Law [SB 346 (Kehoe, Chapter 307, Statutes of 2010)].

Priority 2. Community Engagement

Community engagement is central to DTSC's work as it provides better understanding of environmental problems and better enables DTSC to deliver on its mission. DTSC will continue efforts to standardize public engagement across the department, including setting expectations for interacting with and involving the public in an inclusive and transparent manner. Successful collaboration is central to success in carrying out meaningful community engagement – both internal collaboration between the Office of Environmental Equity (OEE) and other DTSC programs; and external collaboration between DTSC and the public.

Goal 2.1. Update the Public Participation Manual

In FY 24-25, DTSC committed to start the revamping of the decades old DTSC Public Participation Manual. OEE has taken initial steps to revising the manual and has a goal to release an updated manual by the end of FY 25-26. The manual will serve as a resource to reflect the current best practices in equitable and inclusive engagement.

Deliverable 2.1.1. Public Engagement of Proposed Updates and Revisions

Meet with the Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC), community organizations, tribal representatives, and others to receive public input on the Manual (target timeframe of Spring 2026).

Deliverable 2.1.2. Final Draft Release

Release the final draft by July 1, 2026.

Goal 2.2. Conduct Public Participation and Environmental Justice Trainings

In FY 24-25, DTSC began the development of internal trainings to educate technical staff on conducting public engagement and on environmental justice.

Deliverable 2.2.1. Implement Public Participation Trainings

DTSC will begin to roll out these trainings to all DTSC staff in FY 25-26 and will continue to develop and refine training modules on an ongoing basis.

Priority 3. Science, Technology, and Policy Innovation

DTSC is a science-based organization that strives to use the best science to guide policy development and decision making. While reform has allowed DTSC to make significant strides in bolstering our commitment to science policy, including hiring a talented workforce of scientists and engineers, DTSC must continue to invest resources in this area such that DTSC remains at the cutting edge of new environmental issues; and to implement new technologies and methodologies as they are developed.

Goal 3.1. Right-size the Environmental Chemistry Laboratory

The Environmental Chemistry Laboratory (ECL) is a key asset that supports each of the department's programs and other agencies by conducting analytical testing of environmental and biological media and consumer products (e.g., soil, air, carpets, personal care products, serum, urine, etc.). ECL is staffed by nationally renowned scientists, and its work informs risk assessments and enforcement activities. DTSC is prioritizing deliverables that will support ECL in staying at the forefront of science and technology, while maintaining its standard of excellence.

Deliverable 3.1.1. Address Laboratory Costs

Running an analytical chemistry lab requires consistent funding sources to maintain the laboratory's equipment and to furnish the laboratory with necessary supplies. As DTSC ramps up enforcement and compliance activities, laboratory supplies and maintenance costs have increased as well. DTSC will evaluate potential funding sources for ECL and plans to develop a long-term strategy to maintain the longevity of the lab.

Goal 3.2. Incorporate Lead Source Attribution in Cleanups

Lead contamination in soil is a serious environmental health problem and can come from different sources, including paint containing lead and emissions from industrial operations. While DTSC has overseen cleanup of lead contaminated soil for many years, DTSC has yet to incorporate source attribution into its process.

Lead source attribution is the process of identifying the origin of lead contamination in a specific area by applying a series of analytical methods on soil samples to determine the likely sources of contamination. By implementing such strategies, DTSC would be able to

oversee more effective and targeted investigations and cleanups related to lead contamination in soil and ultimately, improve identification of responsible parties.

Deliverable 3.2.1. United States Geological Survey Report

DTSC has contracted with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to develop a report that evaluates and summarizes methodologies used to conduct lead source attribution. The study would detail the methodologies to differentiate the source of lead from seven source types, which include lead acid battery recycling facilities, lead-based paints, and leaded gasoline. DTSC anticipates receiving the final report by the end of 2025.

Deliverable 3.2.2. Pilot the Strategies of the USGS Report

Upon completion of the final USGS report, DTSC intends to test the methodologies described in the report for one or more investigation sites.

Goal 3.3. Holistic Approach to Vapor Intrusion

Vapor intrusion (VI) refers to the movement of chemical vapors from contaminated soil and groundwater to air inside buildings. DTSC intends to transition to a holistic approach to manage VI by broadening the technical toolbox, increasing involvement with interested parties, and improving community engagement. The CalEPA VI Workgroup is a multi-agency group formed by members from DTSC, the State and Regional Water Boards, and Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment that seeks to collaboratively address VI issues at contaminated sites and promote consistency within CalEPA. The CalEPA VI Workgroup is building on previous trainings and shifting its focus to a holistic approach to VI.

Deliverable 3.3.1. VI Public Workshop Series

The CalEPA VI Workgroup will host a series of at least 3 public workshops in FY 25-26. Tentative topics for these technical workshops include:

- Conceptual site models and best business practices
- Screening paths to VI closure (including case studies)
- Vapor intrusion in the community (an EJ focus)
- Vapor intrusion databases in Envirostor and GeoTracker
- Reflection and Call to Action Workshop

Deliverable 3.3.2. Internal VI Workshop Training

The CalEPA VI Workgroup is developing a series of internal staff training modules on the holistic approach to VI. The training will include the technical toolbox with increased community collaboration including input received from the public at VI workshop series.

Goal 3.4. Optimize DTSC's Safer Consumer Products Throughput and Impact

DTSC reform allowed SCP to double in size and build a team with expertise in a broad range of scientific and technical disciplines. With this augmentation, SCP is now staffed to optimize its workflow and, where appropriate, streamline steps to find safer alternatives. SCP will introduce rulemaking for a series of product-chemical combinations aimed at upstream prevention of our most sensitive populations and environments.

Deliverable 3.4.1. Development of the Draft SCP Workplan

The SCP Priority Product Workplan provides a three-year plan for product category research. The 2027-29 draft workplan is under development in FY 25-26. SCP will interview at least 50 different community groups, non-governmental organizations, industry and academic researchers, and other governmental entities to solicit input for the workplan.

Deliverable 3.4.2. Accelerate the quest for safer products, with a focus on children's health, worker safety, and water protection.

SCP develops and releases scientific research documents to support Priority Product Listings or to spur industry adoption of alternatives before a listing occurs. The SCP program will release five technical documents to advance the adoption and availability of safer alternatives.

Goal 3.5 Artificial Intelligence

Government Code 11549.65(c) requires any state agency or department to consider implementing Generative Artificial Intelligence to improve efficiency, effectiveness, accessibility, and equity of government operations. As such, DTSC has been investigating potential opportunities for which Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be implemented within our programs to help make DTSC more effective and efficient and is taking steps towards adoption of AI technologies, including the development of policies, and evaluating risks.

Deliverable 3.5.1. Develop an AI Policy

The Government Operations Agency, the Department of General Services, and the Department of Technology (CDT) have developed policies regarding AI. DTSC's Office of Environmental Information Management (OEIM), in collaboration with the Office of Legal Counsel, is developing an internal policy tailored to DTSC's needs and would govern DTSC's use of AI. DSTC expects to release the policy by the end of calendar year 2025.

Deliverable 3.5.2. Conduct and Streamline AI Risk Assessments

The adoption of AI presents potential risks, and reducing these risks is crucial for maintaining the integrity of DTSC's operations. Following the release of the DTSC AI policy, DTSC will conduct risk assessments as part of the AI adoption approval process for each defined AI business use case. OEIM will implement a standardized process for conducting AI risk assessments. This initiative involves developing a comprehensive AI risk assessment framework and associated tools to streamline information gathering for analysis. The goal is to ensure all AI deployments are thoroughly assessed for potential ethical, privacy, security, and operational risks, as mandated by CDT. OEIM expects to finalize this streamlined AI risk assessment process and begin applying it to new and existing AI projects and use-case approvals by the end of FY 25-26.

Priority 4. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

PFAS are persistent pollutants and are known to have adverse impacts on health and the environment. DTSC has worked to regulate PFAS in consumer products and partnered with the legislature to develop policies to limit the use of PFAS in manufacturing. However, more

needs to be done to address environmental contamination and to prevent the further spread of contamination and exposure. DTSC will continue to regulate PFAS in consumer products while addressing existing contamination.

Goal 4.1. Remediation of Sites Contaminated with PFAS

SMRP will use its cost recovery and enforcement authorities to address releases of PFAS designated as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). SMRP is developing a strategic approach for managing PFAS release investigations and cleanups, and is promoting increased collaboration to ensure consistency across the state when it comes to addressing PFAS.

Deliverable 4.1.1. PFAS Action Plan

DTSC is developing a PFAS Action Plan that outlines SMRP's recommended actions to facilitate site investigations and cleanups where PFAS are a contaminant of concern. DTSC will monitor the changing regulatory environment, promote coordination between interested parties, develop consistency using the best available science, and create a repository of applicable guidance. The PFAS Action Plan will be made available for BES review in March 2026.

Deliverable 4.1.2. PFAS Collaboration

DTSC will educate staff on the PFAS Action Plan through quarterly coordination meetings and trainings. DTSC will also seek to hold workshops and post information on our website to publicly share information regarding PFAS and cleanups.

Goal 4.2. Prevent PFAS Pollution

In alignment with the precautionary principle, DTSC will continue upstream prevention of PFAS pollution through regulation of PFAS in consumer products through the SCP program. SCP will continue to pursue regulation of PFAS in consumer products and is committed to reducing all non-essential uses of PFAS in consumer products.

Deliverable 4.2.1. Identify products that contribute to PFAS in California's water supply

By June 2026, evaluate PFAS in interior and exterior home and workplace applications, such as floor polishes and concrete and masonry sealants, to identify potential priority product listings to prevent unnecessary PFAS contamination of California's water supply.