

Reducing Risk

Experts call for EPA policy change

At first blush, the concept of comparative risk is a simple one, implying a ranking of problems based on the degree of threat they pose to human health and the environment. As a tool for setting policy and making cleanup or enforcement decisions, comparative risk analysis further implies that problems posing the greatest threats would receive priority attention. Theoretically, ozone depletion, which potentially affects the entire planet, should rank higher than 5 acres of solvent-soaked soil at an abandoned factory in the desert. As sensible as this may sound, it flies in the face of EPA's 20-year history of putting U.S. environmental policy into practice.