

The 5 key elements of the Precautionary Principle

1. Anticipatory Action: There is a duty to take anticipatory action to prevent harm. Government, business, and community groups, as well as the general public, share this responsibility.

2. Right to Know: The community has a right to know complete and accurate information on potential human health and environmental impacts associated with the selection of products, services, operations or plans. The burden to supply this information lies with the proponent, not with the general public.

3. Alternatives Assessment: An obligation exists to examine a full range of alternatives and select the alternative with the least potential impact on human health and the environment, including the alternative of doing nothing.

4. Full Cost Accounting: When evaluating potential alternatives, there is a duty to consider all the reasonably foreseeable costs, including raw materials, manufacturing, transportation, use, cleanup, eventual disposal, and health costs even if such costs are not reflected in the initial price. Short-and long-term benefits and time thresholds should be considered when making decisions.

5. Participatory Decision Process: Decisions applying the Precautionary Principle must be transparent, participatory, and informed by the best available science and other relevant information.