

# ACUITY Environmental Solutions

## Digging Deeper for Total Environmental Remediation Technologies

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Steve Irvin did not intend to develop his own company. In 2002, however, Irvin found himself at a crossroad, and his resulting path led to the founding of ACUITY Environmental Solutions (AcuityES), which manages and completes remediation and environmental compliance contracts throughout the United States from its base in Fishers, Ind.

“I was frustrated with my current employer for not understanding how to better manage remediation costs and human health risks,” explains Irvin. “I would bring in a

multi-million dollar contract opportunity, and because the company was fearful of taking on that kind of liability they would ‘pass on the opportunity.’ At the time, the company was restructuring itself after declaring Chapter 11, so I understand the apprehension, but to me it seemed like the opportunity far outweighed the risk.”

One day, Irvin contacted a previous coworker, who was currently working for a Fortune 100 company, to discuss the creation of a new environmental firm.



“He asked us to come to their corporate office and make a formal presentation. So, I rounded up my ‘A-Team’ and they presented us with a variety of environmental cases, expecting us to approach them all in the same way,” says Irvin. “Meanwhile, the environmental consultant already working for the Fortune 100 company was sitting in the room, just observing. The corporate staff asked us what we would have recommended for a particular job that the consultant was already engaged to complete. So, we made our recommendation, the consultant countered it with the plan he actually was working on and we, not knowing who he was, just blurted out, ‘Well that’s a dangerous approach! If you take that approach there’s a clear risk of fire.’ As it happened, the foremost expert on the technology that consultant had recommended was with our team and he proceeded to explain why that technology wouldn’t adequately solve the problem and all of a sudden, without us even knowing it, we won our first client, who we have been working with ever since.”

### Only the Best Will Do

AcuityES began operations under the name SeaBreeze Technologies LLC, but in 2010 the company hired a branding

consultant who suggested a new corporate identity that better portrays the company’s story. Irvin explained that the branding consultant wanted the company to express its acuity – a Middle English word defined as an acuteness of vision or perception, a keenness – on environmental solutions, thus the name became Acuity Environmental Solutions. AcuityES was (re)born, and the company is now successfully working to expand the name’s presence and reputation as enthusiastically and consistently as it does its staff and depth of expertise.

Today, AcuityES brings together accredited experts in the field, providing comprehensive and well-researched solutions to clients with contaminated sites. “There are a lot of people out there who try to offer remediation services, but there are not a lot of people out there who understand what it takes to actually fix the problem,” asserts Irvin, who remains a principal engineer at AcuityES. “That’s where the doctorate and master’s degrees make a difference and that is who we hire. Our employees do an amazing job and it’s exciting for me to come into work every day because they are so ahead of the curve.”



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Just shy of its 10th anniversary, AcuityES has managed to establish itself as one of the top most trusted authorities in the industry. The company has become a prominent environmental consulting firm because it developed and utilizes the procedures to identify and remove the source of environmental problems, as well as manage residual contaminants in a cost-effective, compliant manner. This comprehensive ability to eliminate environmental challenges means AcuityES recognizes large corporations, federal agencies such as the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force, and several law firms as long-standing clients.

“We do a lot of work for lawyers. Not only will we make recommendations as a consulting firm, but we will also testify in court in the case of a legal dispute over the conditions of the site,” explains Irvin. “Today, we have projects throughout the greater Chicago area, and in Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Michigan and Indiana, of course.”

One of the firm’s earliest, and most fondly remembered, projects was for the Department of Defense. “We worked as a subcontractor on a team that specialized in program management and environmental remediation support for the U.S. Air Force Real Property Agency (AFRPA) participation in the Base Realignment and Closure program [BRAC],” reveals Irvin.

“Basically, when Congress votes to close a military base and return it to the community, it is responsible for ensuring that the quality of that land is as good, if not better, than it was prior to the establishment of the base. In this specific case, AFRPA invited three different firms to submit proposals and was considering dividing up the BRAC work to facilitate completing the work as they saw fit, so each firm had to basically take one base and write up a report and suggest a plan of attack to remediate the site and do it as cost effectively, efficiently and long-lasting as possible to save the government, not just millions of dollars, but billions of dollars. Ultimately, AFRPA was so pleased with our team’s proposal that they awarded every single one of those contracts to us.”

### **Brainiacs in High Demand**

Though the company has worked with some of the largest clients in the industry, it also engages with local and regional

businesses, as in the case of one of AcuityES’s current projects. “We’re working to complete remediation of an old chrome plating shop in Muncie, Ind.,” explains Irvin. “It’s basically a \$4.5 million site cleanup where we treated all of the soil in the area and covered it with a cap. After the soil, or source area, was remediated, we then proceeded to treat the affected groundwater beneath the site and the adjoining properties. As you can imagine, when you run a business that requires lots of solvents and chemicals, spills will happen over time.”



The firm won the contract by submitting a proposal to treat the site using technology that had never been used for soil or groundwater remediation, that incidentally cost half as much as other methods proposed by the competition. This new method reduced the timeline for remediation from an average of 15 to 20 years down to just one, with two years of post-treatment monitoring.

“We have to hire a group of full-time brainiacs to pull these kinds of things off,” laughs Irvin. “It’s precisely because of the talent of our chemists, engineers, geologists and hydrologists that we are able to push the technologies available in the industry in new directions. We are essentially both the consultant and the general contractor in the equation. We bring in the talent to get the job done right, but we also need our ‘yellow iron component.’ We don’t need to own a bulldozer, but we do need to know someone who can tell us where to rent one and who can recommend a truly skilled operator to complete the work.”

Much of the AcuityES reputation is based on the company’s willingness to question the accepted means of operation, and its ability to dig deeper into the physical and chemical inter-dependence at each site. The company does timely research before it establishes a solution that makes sense in the languages of human, business, science and law.

Equipped with a team of leading experts across multiple fields, along with the experience and ambition to effectively manage risk in order to pursue opportunity, ACUITY Environmental Solutions will continue to reinforce its brand as a preferred partner in the field of environmental remediation. •