



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Citizen's Guide to Underground Storage Tanks

OFFICE OF LAND QUALITY

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Description:

- Underground storage tanks (USTs) and UST systems are used by many types of facilities and businesses that store and dispense regulated substances, including petroleum products such as gasoline, hazardous substances such as industrial solvents, and a variety of other industrial chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers, and even food products. Stored substances can be in liquid or gas form. Indiana has regulations for USTs and UST systems to help minimize the potential for accidental leaks and spills. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) enforces Indiana's UST regulations to protect the environment and public health.
- UST regulations apply for tanks that hold greater than 110 gallons of a regulated substance, as well as underground piping, ancillary equipment and secondary containment with at least 10 percent of their combined volume underground. There are certain exemptions under the UST rule for some types of tanks, including septic tanks, tanks that hold heating oil for on-site consumption, and farm or residential tanks of 1,100 gallons or less that are used for the non-commercial storage of motor fuel. Links for Indiana's regulations and certain exemptions are provided in this fact sheet under the **More Information** section.
- In years past, most tanks were made out of unprotected steel, which was prone to rusting and leaking. Statewide and national efforts began in the 1980s to address problems associated with leaking, corroding and failing USTs and UST systems. Systems in Indiana were required to be closed or upgraded by December of 1988. USTs today are generally made of lined steel or fiberglass, and UST systems must be maintained so releases from tanks and piping are prevented or detected, corrosion is prevented (for steel USTs), and spills and overfills are prevented or detected. Under amendments to the rule made in 2009, Indiana also requires secondary containment for all new and replacement tanks and piping.
- Where leaks or spills are suspected or confirmed, tank owners and operators must report them to IDEM and contamination must be cleaned up in compliance with environmental regulations. The Excess Liability Trust Fund (ELTF), similar to an insurance program, is available to help eligible owners and operators meet the costs of cleanups that result from accidental releases. ELTF is funded through tank registration fees paid to the state by tank owners and operators and a one-cent-per-gallon inspection fee that is collected on gasoline, kerosene and diesel fuel sold in Indiana.

Public and Environmental Impacts:

- People can be exposed to harmful contaminants by drinking contaminated water, breathing vapors from substances that volatilize, or absorption through the skin. Where leaks impact ground water, private or municipal drinking water wells may be impacted. For substances that volatilize, spills to ground water and soil can be a source of vapors that can impact enclosed structures, such as homes or businesses, through cracks in the foundation or sump pits and build up to harmful levels.
- Spills to surface waters can threaten fish and other wildlife.

- The risk of fire or explosion is a public safety concern for large spills or where spills enter storm sewers and other locations such as buildings.
- Faulty installation, equipment failure, corrosion or inadequate operation and maintenance procedures can result in UST spills above ground or releases below ground. Steps in the cleanup of spilled substances include mitigating immediate threats, investigating the extent of the contamination in the environment, and developing and implementing a plan for the long-term cleanup of the contamination.
- To minimize and prevent accidental leaks and spills to the greatest extent possible, owners and operators must be trained and certified in various aspects of system maintenance and operations. IDEM provides the required training and certification program for free. A link for the training is provided in this fact sheet under the **More Information** section.

IDEM's Role:

- IDEM is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for safe industrial, agricultural, commercial, and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy.
- IDEM works to educate owners and operators about their requirements.
- IDEM maintains a database of regulated USTs, tracks leaks and spills reported in Indiana, and ensures the collection of tank fees.
- IDEM conducts inspections at UST facilities to check for proper registration, system compliance, operational compliance, record-keeping, and proof of financial responsibility. IDEM also documents release reports for leaks and spills, and ensures appropriate clean-up for protection of human health and the environment.
- IDEM informs local health departments about suspected or actual releases reported to the agency and allows for public participation when evaluating cleanup plans.
- IDEM reviews claims from owners and operators for ELTF funds.

Owner's and Operator's Role:

- UST owners and operators are responsible for registering USTs and fee payment.
- Owners and operators must be trained and certified by IDEM in the maintenance and operation of a UST system, reporting suspected or confirmed releases, and responding to emergency spills. They must ensure UST systems are properly constructed and installed to ensure proper operations and ensure UST systems are tested, maintained and operated to prevent leaks or detect leaks when they occur, and maintain required records. They must immediately stop leaks, report them to IDEM within 24 hours, fully investigate releases, and complete a cleanup as necessary to adequately protect human health and the environment.
- Owners and operators must have a financial responsibility mechanism of up to \$1,000,000 per release, to pay for the cleanup and to compensate third parties for damages. Most owners and operators of petroleum USTs utilize ELTF to satisfy this requirement. Owners and operators of USTs containing hazardous substances must provide an alternative form of financial responsibility, such as private insurance.
- Owners and operators must properly close USTs that are no longer in use.

Citizen's Role:

- Citizens play a vital role in protecting Indiana's environment and may contact IDEM with any questions, comments or concerns.
- Report abandoned USTs or suspected or actual releases or spills to IDEM's 24-hour Environmental Emergency Hotline at (888) 233-7745.
- If you notice an oil sheen or a petroleum odor or taste in your drinking water, report it to IDEM's 24-hour Environmental Emergency Hotline at (888) 233-7745.
- If you smell gas or chemical odor in your home or other building, open the windows, leave the

house and call 911. Do not use any item that may produce a spark of flame.

- If you smell gas or chemical odors coming from the sewers, you should leave the area and call 911.

More Information:

- To report releases (owners and operators are required to report to IDEM within 24 hours):
 - Call (317) 232-8900 during normal business hours or (888) 233-7745 after hours; or
 - Complete the Initial Incident Report Form 54487 found at www.IN.gov/idem/5157.htm#olq_ust; e-mail the form to leakingUST@idem.IN.gov or fax the completed form to (317) 234-0428.
- Owners, operators and citizens should direct questions to UST staff at (800) 451-6027 ext. 2-8900 or (317) 232-8900.
- To find regulatory and training information, visit these Web pages:
 - UST compliance and operator training information - www.IN.gov/idem/4999.htm
 - UST regulations:
 - The Indiana Code [IC 13-23 and IC 13-11, definitions) and the Indiana Administrative Code 329 IAC 9 (the rule) - www.IN.gov/idem/4999.htm
 - UST Rule Amendments Fact Sheet – www.IN.gov/idem/5050.htm
 - Heating oil tank closure information (IC 22-12-9) - www.IN.gov/idem/4997.htm
 - LUST environmental cleanup information - www.IN.gov/idem/4997.htm
 - Excess Liability Trust Fund (ELTF) funding information – www.IN.gov/idem/5063.htm