

# Tank Closure & Cleanup Requirements

Fact Sheet for California Property Owners

May 2014



## Problems with Leaking Tanks

Across the U.S., nearly 575,000 underground storage tanks (USTs) store fuel or other potentially hazardous liquids. Another 1.8 million USTs that previously stored these chemicals have been taken out of service in the last 30 years. In the past, gasoline stations and other facilities used USTs made from a single layer of material, usually steel or fiberglass. This is known as single-walled construction. Newer tanks have two layers of material, called double-walled construction.

Sometimes USTs leak stored substances into the ground. Holes and cracks form in the tank as a result of degradation, and sometimes simply because of wear and tear. Gasoline, diesel and other materials stored in the tanks can then leak into soil and groundwater. The biggest danger from a leaking UST is pollution of groundwater, a source of drinking water for more than 80% of Californians.<sup>1</sup> Gas stations with newer, double-walled USTs can also have leaks during fueling, from piping between the USTs and pumps, and sometimes when a tank wall breaks.

Fuel leaks also increase the danger of fire or explosions and can harm human health and the environment. Gasoline and fuel products have ingredients that can cause health problems if people breathe them or have contact with them. Empty USTs can also collapse and create large sinkholes or depressions in the ground, which can be very dangerous.

## Tank Closure/Removal Process

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), states, and tribes work together with property owners and tank operators to protect the environment and human health from leaking USTs. If you own property with UST(s) in the ground that have not been used for more than one year, you must permanently close the UST(s) by removing the tanks and associated piping. USTs are removed by digging out the earth around them, followed by the use of heavy machinery to lift tanks out of the ground. A properly licensed contractor is required to make sure the tank removal is safe, successful, and meets the requirements set forth in the UST Removal Permit. Be sure to obtain permits **before** getting your tanks removed.

## Steps for UST Owners-Successful Tank Removal:

### 1. Find your local regulatory agency.

- a. Go to CalEPA's Regulator Directory:

<http://cersapps.calepa.ca.gov/Public/Directory>

- b. Enter your property address into "Facility Address Search" to find your local regulating agency, known as a Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). On the local CUPA page, click on "Details" to see the contact information, phone number and address of your local CUPA.

### 2. Call or visit your local CUPA:

- a. Request a list of items necessary for tank closure/removal (e.g. UST registration, UST closure permit, and soil testing requirements).

Local agencies **may or may not** approve of leaving the tank(s) in the ground and filling them with a solid material (called an inert solid) if tank removal could damage nearby utilities or buildings.

- b. Complete required paperwork and pay fees.
- c. Request help finding a properly licensed contractor.

### 3. Obtain a bid from one or more contractors.

### 4. Select your contractor and schedule the tank removal with your local CUPA.

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## 5. Perform tank removal with soil testing.

The California Health and Safety Code requires that you test the soil surrounding tanks to make sure there has been no harmful soil pollution from a leak in the tanks or piping. Your contractor will do the soil testing.

## 6. Submit a tank removal report to your CUPA.

A report with the soil testing results must be prepared by a licensed geologist or engineer and submitted to your local CUPA.



If soil test results show that pollution is below harmful limits, then no additional work is needed and you will receive a letter from your CUPA stating that nothing else is required.

If soil test results show that pollution is at or above harmful limits, then you will need to complete additional steps, outlined below.

## Steps for Owners of Polluted Sites

### 1. Submit a site assessment plan.

A licensed geologist or engineer, registered with the state of California, needs to prepare a site assessment plan. Your local cleanup agency (your CUPA will refer you to the correct agency) **must** approve the plan before any work begins. Site assessment usually involves drilling holes into the ground to collect soil and groundwater samples, which are then tested for pollution. You may be required to install groundwater wells to periodically test groundwater pollution for a year or longer.

### 2. Submit a site assessment report.

Your contractor will prepare a report with the results of the site assessment tests and

recommend whether or not additional work is needed to meet California requirements.

### 3. Submit a site cleanup plan.

Your cleanup agency will inform you if your property needs cleanup action, such as digging up and removing dirty soil or installing cleanup systems that will operate on your property to clean up the soil and/or groundwater to required limits. A licensed geologist or engineer, registered with the state of California, must prepare and submit a work plan with proposed cleanup actions. **Before** any cleanup actions are taken, your local cleanup agency must approve the work plan.

## Funding Programs

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) has programs to assist owners facing financial hardship.

### Funding Program Information

#### Orphan Site Cleanup Fund (OSCF) Program

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/ustcf/oscf.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/ustcf/oscf.shtml)

Contact: Judy Reid, 916-341-5760,  
judy.reid@waterboards.ca.gov

#### Replacing, Removing, or Upgrading Storage Tank (RUST) Program

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/ustcf/rust.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/ustcf/rust.shtml)

Contact: Janice Clemons, 916-341-5857,  
Janice.Clemons@waterboards.ca.gov

#### Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Fund

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/ustcf/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/ustcf/)

Contact: Lisa Labrado, 916-341-7361,  
Lisa.Labrado@waterboards.ca.gov

*For additional information, reasonable accommodations, or translation services, please contact Lynda Arakelian, [arakelian.lynda@epa.gov](mailto:arakelian.lynda@epa.gov) or 213-244-1805.*

<http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/ab2222/docs/ab2222.pdf>