



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Central Region Office

1250 West Alder St., Union Gap, WA 98903-0009 • 509-575-2490

October 3, 2023

Wine Country Store, LLC
c/o Ben Kleban
7 E. Rose Street
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Re: Technical assistance regarding gasoline release from 7 E. Rose Street, Walla Walla

Dear Ben Kleban:

On September 14, 2023, the Department of Ecology was notified of odor complaints at the Marcus Whitman Hotel and Conference Center. Ecology responded to perform air monitoring for responder and public safety and discovered elevated gasoline concentrations in the hotel basement. Concentrations of explosive vapors were recorded between 60 and 90 percent on the lower explosive limit. At 100 percent, vapors can combust. The hotel was evacuated. Gasoline has been discovered in two sumps in the Marcus Whitman and one sump in the vacated building at 106 N. 2nd Avenue. The U.S. Post Office was also evacuated due to ongoing safety concerns. The gasoline has migrated to groundwater, a water of the state.

Ecology worked with the City of Walla Walla to initiate an investigation into subsurface contamination and threats to human health and the environment. Hazardous materials response contractors were hired to ventilate potentially explosive vapor concentrations in buildings and to conduct borehole monitoring of subsurface contamination. Our investigation discovered gasoline that created a threat of fire and explosion and continues to threaten groundwater. Additionally, elevated volatile organic vapor concentrations for occupants in affected buildings created a human health inhalation hazard due to the exposure to potentially toxic vapors.

Data from soil boring, monitoring well installation, and laboratory analytical results trace the gasoline release to your property, the Wine Country Store, located at 7 E. Rose Street. Testing has not shown a link to the Circle K at 315 N 2nd Avenue.

We appreciate that you have emptied two gasoline tanks in response. If we determine you are responsible for the spill, we may require you to pay one or more of the following costs: 1) resource damage assessment, 2) penalty; and 3) reimbursement of state expenses. Your cooperation and full and rapid response to clean up the spill may help reduce these costs. We are providing this

technical assistance to clarify what actions must be completed to resolve this emergency. We ask that you immediately conduct the following actions:

- Assess the full extent of contamination, including impacts of vapors or gasoline to soils, basements, sewers, utility lines, groundwater, surface water, and indoor air.
- Remove and dispose of any free product gasoline discovered on groundwater.
- Provide ongoing ventilation to reduce gasoline vapors from affected buildings and conduct vapor monitoring daily.
- Recover, remediate, treat, and properly dispose of gasoline contaminated soil and groundwater.
- Assume financial responsibility for investigation, cleanup, and ventilation activities by hiring a qualified contractor as soon as possible.
- Regularly communicate your progress and monitoring data related to investigation, removal, and treatment of contamination to Ecology. Ecology requests monthly written status reports to document cleanup progress.

Failure to act may result in Ecology issuing an order or other enforcement action.

If you have questions or need further information, please contact me at sahu461.ecy.wa.gov or 509-961-8868.

Sincerely,



Sam Hunn
Regional Supervisor
Eastern Region Office (ERO)
Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program

ecc: Julian Beattie, Assistant Attorney General
Carlos Clements, Ecology, Spills Program Manager
Dave Byers, Ecology, Spills Program Response Section Manager
Tami Neilson, Ecology, Spills Program Enforcement Lead
Ty Keltner, Ecology, Spills Program Communications Manager
Stephanie May, Ecology, ERO Communications Manager
Geoff Baran, Ecology, Spills Natural Resource Damage Assessment Lead
Ryan Olson, Ecology, Spills Program Budget Manager
Nick Acklam, Ecology, Toxics Cleanup Program

file: Eastern Region Central Files, ERTS # 725438; Walla Walla County