

# Focus on Underground Storage Tanks



## WHY IT MATTERS

Washington's underground storage tank (UST) compliance program has significantly reduced the number and severity of releases of petroleum and other hazardous substances. These substances can pollute drinking water and pose serious threats to human health and the environment.

Ecology regulates more than 9,000 USTs at more than 3,300 facilities throughout the state, primarily gas stations. Ecology conducts inspections at about 1,200 facilities each year, and provides technical assistance to owners and operators.

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## Proposed Legislation

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) seeks reauthorization of Washington's underground storage tank (UST) compliance program.

### The problem

Washington's UST compliance program is subject to sunset review and reauthorization under Chapter 43.131 RCW, the Sunset Act. The program was originally authorized by the Legislature in 1989, under Chapter 90.76 RCW, and has been extended twice under the Sunset Act in 1998 and 2007. The program is currently set to terminate on July 1, 2019.

Under the UST compliance program, Ecology regulates and inspects USTs that store petroleum and other hazardous substances. The purpose of the program is to prevent releases from USTs that can pollute drinking water sources and pose serious threats to human health and the environment.

Washington's program is approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This means that Washington's UST owners and operators are subject to state regulation, and Ecology's inspections and enforcement. If the program is not reauthorized, UST owners and operators would be subject to federal regulation, and EPA's inspections and enforcement.

### The solution

Reauthorize Washington's UST compliance program, which has significantly reduced releases of petroleum and other hazardous substances and is responsive to local needs and concerns.

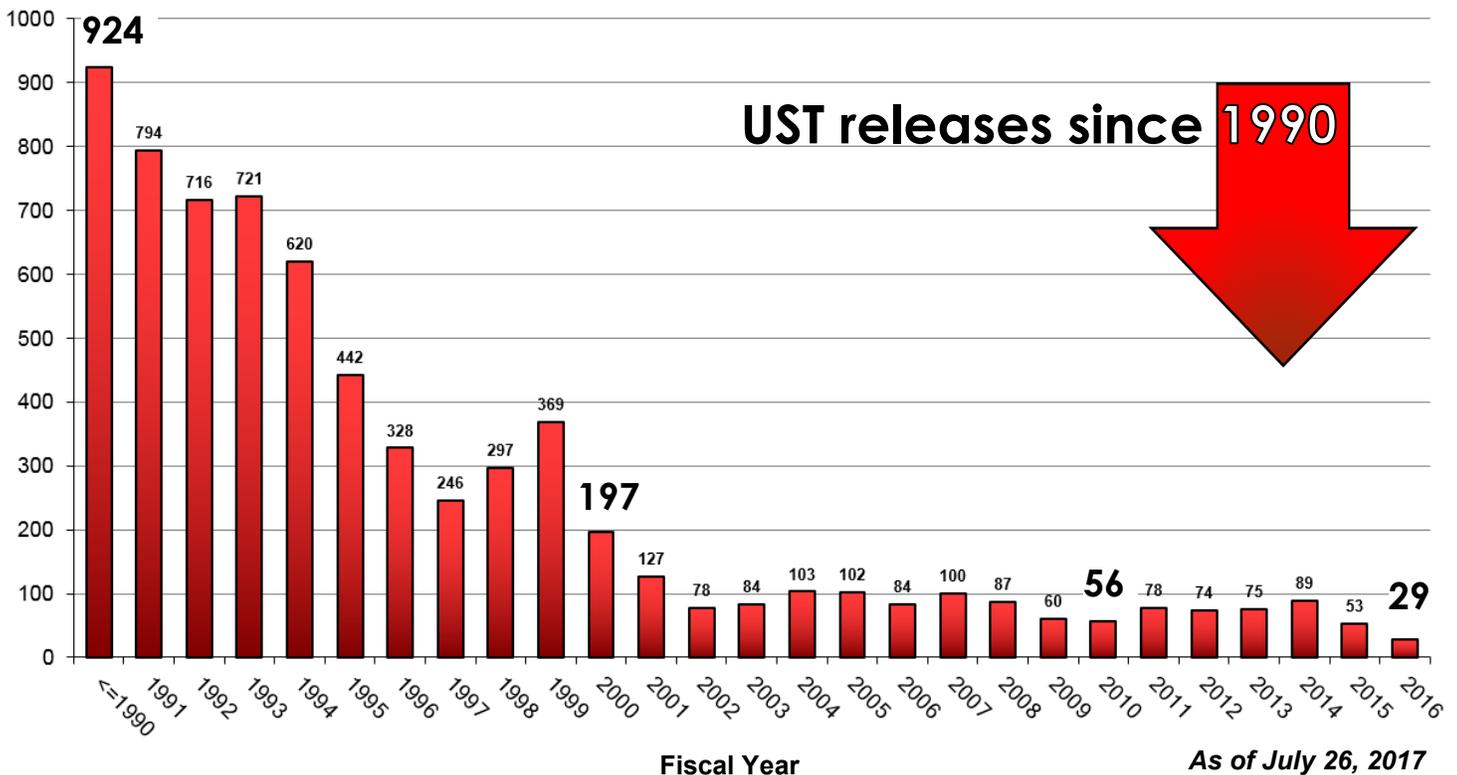
### Ecology's proposal

Ecology proposes reauthorizing Washington's UST compliance program for another ten years to July 1, 2029. This means that the program would continue to be subject to sunset review under Chapter 43.131 RCW. The legislation would not alter the existing program.

## How it will benefit Washington

Washington’s UST compliance program has significantly reduced the number and severity of releases of petroleum and other hazardous substances from USTs, which can pollute drinking water and pose serious threats to human health and the environment. Such releases are also expensive to clean up and can hinder economic and community redevelopment. Reauthorization of Washington’s successful program is necessary to prevent future such releases.

If Washington’s program is not reauthorized, UST owners and operators would be subject to federal (not state) regulations, and the EPA’s (not Ecology’s) inspections and enforcement. While the federal program is similar, Washington’s is more responsive to local needs and concerns, and emphasizes education and assistance over punitive financial penalties to achieve compliance goals.



## More information

For more information about Washington’s UST compliance program, visit:

[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/ust-lust/tanks.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/ust-lust/tanks.html).

## Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation for disabilities, or printed materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-7668 or visit <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/accessibility.html>. Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. Persons with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.