



## What To Do If You Find A Leak Or Spill From Your Underground Storage Tank

### From Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Program

If you, as the owner or operator of an underground storage tank (UST), become aware of a leak or spill of petroleum or other hazardous substances, you must act quickly. Your quick actions will reduce the immediate risk to people and property and will keep potential environmental impacts to a minimum. In addition, there are certain reporting requirements that must be met.

For more information, please contact the nearest office of the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology). See the map on the next page to locate your site's Regional Office.

**Be careful!** The cleanup of leaks or spills of hazardous substances can be dangerous work. Most of the activities described here are best handled by environmental professionals. Many of these activities require specifically licensed or certified contractors. You are encouraged to discuss this with Ecology and your UST service provider.

#### Within 24 Hours

- Notify your site's Ecology Regional Office immediately.
- Take appropriate actions to eliminate or reduce fire, explosion, or vapor hazards.
- Visually inspect the area. Prevent contamination from spreading.
- Avoid washing gasoline or diesel fuel into storm drains or sewers where it may affect surface or groundwater.

#### As Soon As Possible

Within 20 days after confirming a release, ensure that your environmental professional completes the following tasks:

- Investigate for "free product" (petroleum found floating on water or pooled up on the soil or elsewhere).
- Continue monitoring. Reduce any additional safety hazards posed by free product or vapors which may have moved into nearby structures such as basements or sewers.
- Reduce the threat to human health and the environment posed by contaminated soils. (Soils must be covered while stored, and treated or disposed of appropriately.)

- Sample for hazardous substances in the areas where it is likely to be found. This includes groundwater if there is a possibility it has been impacted.

If samples meet cleanup standards, or if contamination is very limited, the site may not require further action.

#### Make Sure Your Environmental Professional Completes These Additional Tasks

- Continue removing petroleum product ("free product") that may be floating on water or pooled up on the soil or elsewhere to the maximum extent possible.
- If groundwater is affected, or if otherwise required by Ecology, conduct a remedial investigation/feasibility study to provide detailed site information and to identify reasonable cleanup strategies.
- Ensure that cleanup actions comply with state MTCA cleanup standards. These standards specify the levels of contamination that can be safely left in soil or groundwater.
- If it is not possible to meet these cleanup levels, an Ecology investigator may be able to help you find other ways of adequately protecting human health and the environment.



## These Reports Are Required

1. Within 24 hours of finding a leak or spill, you must make an **Initial Report**.
2. Within 20 days, a **Status Report** confirming a release is required. You may

call Ecology with an update on the progress of the cleanup.

3. Within 90 days of discovering the release, you must submit a **Site Characterization Report** to Ecology, in writing.

## It's the Law

The Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) is a result of a citizen initiative mandating efforts to clean up hazardous waste sites. Many of these sites are leaking underground storage tanks. The regulations that implement MTCA and outline what owners and operators must do to meet state and federal regulations can be found in Chapter 173-340 of Washington Administrative Code.

## Regulations at a Glance

After confirming a release from an underground storage tank, here is what you need to do:

### Within 24 Hours:

- Call the Ecology regional office.
- Eliminate immediate hazards.
- Stop the spread of the contamination.

### Within 20 Days:

- Monitor and reduce fire and safety hazards.
- Reduce the threat from exposed contaminated soils by covering them.
- Collect and analyze samples.

- Remove any free product.
- Update Ecology on your progress.

### Within 90 days:

- Submit a written site characterization report.

### As Soon As Possible:

- Complete an investigation
- Complete cleanup
- Submit final report

## Who To Contact

To report a leaking underground storage tank, or to request technical or financial assistance for a cleanup, contact the Ecology Regional Office for the site. See the map on the right.

For more information regarding the regulations, contact:

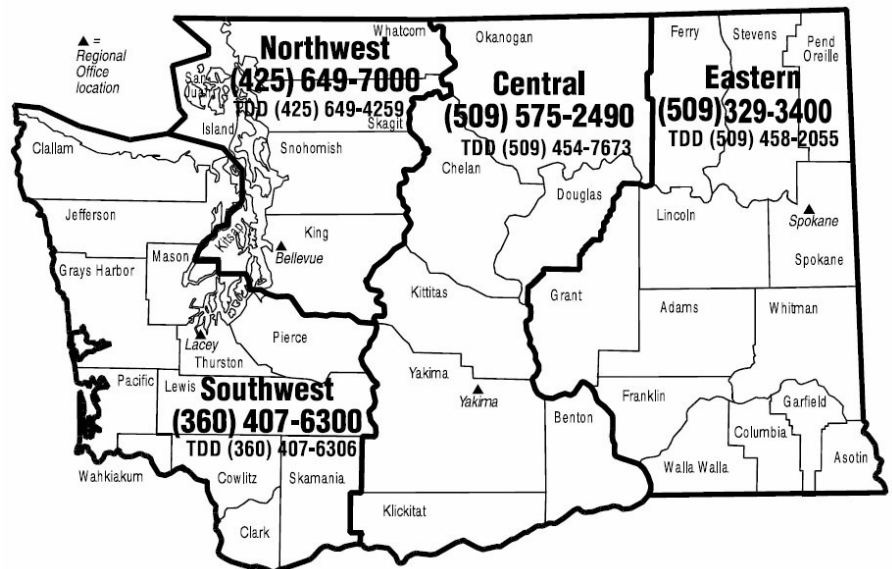
WA Department of Ecology  
Toxics Cleanup Program  
PO Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504-7600  
(360) 407-7170

Toxics Cleanup Program website:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/cleanup.html>

MTCA regulations:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/9406.pdf>



**NOTE: Keep this Focus Sheet handy. Make sure everyone who works around the UST system knows what to do if there is a leak or spill.**

*If you require this publication in an alternate format, please contact Toxics Cleanup at (360) 407-7170 or (TTY) at 711 or 1-877-833-6341.*