

Planning ahead for an underground storage tank removal

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) suggests that you plan ahead for what might be found when removing an underground storage tank (UST). The suggestions below should help you avoid delays and unexpected expenses during removal and clean-up work.

Make sure your tank is registered

By this time, your UST should be registered. If it is not, fill out a “UST Notification” form and return it to the MPCA.

Hire a qualified, MPCA certified contractor

Removing an UST can be dangerous work. Hire a contractor who will take measures to eliminate explosion and fire hazards, such as removing ignition sources and purging the explosive vapors inside the tank.

Contractors who remove regulated UST systems must be certified by the MPCA and have some form of insurance coverage. The contractor employs a certified supervisor who must be on site during the critical procedures of the tank removal. The supervisor must have at least two years of tank-related work experience, have completed an MPCA approved UST course and have actively participated in a minimum of five tank projects within the previous four years.

A list of certified contractors and a fact sheet about how to select a certified contractor may be found on the UST Program Web site. We recommend that you contact several contractors and obtain references. This is an important investment and you want to make sure that you are receiving quality work at a reasonable price.

Notify the MPCA at least ten days before removing the UST

At least ten days in advance of beginning work, notify the MPCA of the tank removal project by using the “Ten-day Advance Notice” form. You must re-notify the MPCA if the date of the UST removal changes by more than two days.

Also, remember to notify your local fire marshal and any other appropriate local officials.

Arrange for a site assessment during UST removal

A site assessment for contamination (soil sampling and laboratory analysis) is required at the time of tank removal. The fact sheet “Site Assessment for Underground Storage Tanks with No Apparent Contamination” provides further details on the site assessment process. Most certified contractors can make arrangements for the necessary site assessment.

Note that if contamination is observed during the removal project, you must call the Minnesota Duty Officer immediately at 651-649-5451 or toll-free at 1-800-422-0798. You must also arrange for clean-up of the site. If you already have a consultant on site or on standby, clean-up work can proceed with a minimal amount of interruption.

Find a suitable location for storing any contaminated soils that may be excavated

To prevent infiltration and run-off while any contaminated soil is being stored, place the soil on plastic and cover it. The MPCA must approve soil treatment plans. Local officials must approve soil storage and land treatment plans. Thinking ahead about these issues before the tank is removed can keep things running smoothly.

Recycle the UST's liquid contents and properly dispose of the tank and its sludge

Before removing the tank from the ground, remove and properly dispose of any remaining liquids and sludges. Fuel and fuel water mixtures can be recycled. The sludge that collects in the bottom of a tank is considered a hazardous waste unless tested and proven otherwise. Facilities that clean USTs and properly recycle waste liquids and sludges must have a Hazardous Waste Generator Identification number. The fact sheet "Fuel-related Wastes" has a list of contractors who perform these services.

The tank itself must be properly disposed of, since sludge remaining in the tank may be considered hazardous. If a steel tank has been cleaned, it can be disposed of as scrap metal.

Notify the MPCA that the tank has been removed

Submittal of the "UST Notification" form is required within 30 days of completing the removal project. Both the tank owner and the contractor performing the work must sign the form.

Need more information?

Visit the UST Program at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/underground-storage-tank-systems>. The site has forms, fact sheets, and other information about USTs and UST requirements.

You can also call the MPCA at 651-296-6300 or 1-800-657-3864 and ask for the UST Program.