

United States Underground Storage Tank Program: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Announces the Successful Cleanup of Over 500,000 Releases



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Mark Barolo, Acting Director of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) Office of Underground Storage Tanks authored an article in the March 2022 edition of the LUSTLine Bulletin titled:

Congratulations to the National UST Program for Cleaning up Over 500,000 UST Releases (“Article”)

Mr. Barolo states that at the end of September 2021 the national underground storage tank (“UST”) program had cleaned up 502,786 releases over the last 33 years. The one-half million figure is stated to mean that almost 90% of the reported UST releases in the United States have been remediated.

EPA has certainly played a role in developing the regulatory program and ensuring the cleanup of a number of the releases. However, like most federal environmental programs, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act UST program can and has been delegated to most states. As a result, the states themselves have played a key role in either guiding the remediation of releases or cleaning them up themselves.

The State of Arkansas received delegation of the federal UST program many years ago. Concerns regarding the ability of Arkansas UST owners and operators to comply with the federal UST financial responsibility requirements prompted the state to create a petroleum UST trust fund. There was a particular concern in Arkansas because many of the state’s UST owners and operators were (and still are) small businesses. As a rural state, the loss of retail motor fuel businesses in some towns could lead to inadequate supply availability in some areas. One of the purposes of the Arkansas trust fund has been to enable UST owners and operators to partially or completely comply with the federal UST responsibility requirements and to have the resources to address UST releases. Further, the trust fund, along with other federal funds and/or grants, have enabled the state to address UST releases for which an owner or operator is either unable or unwilling to remediate a release.

The LUSTLine article also provides a perspective on the benefits provided by the UST regulatory program, noting:

- Protecting human health as the result of reducing human exposure to both on-site and off-site contaminants.

- Increasing land productivity and economic benefit because cleaned-up abandoned UST release sites are safer, better hosts for productive land use activities, and attract higher-valued activities.
- Providing aesthetic and recreational opportunities when cleaned-up UST release sites are redeveloped into attractive and appealing neighborhood assets, such as nature parks, recreational areas, or preserved historic buildings.

The Article also addresses topics such as:

- What helped us achieve this milestone?
- Modified processes and procedures (noting the development of risk assessment procedures)
- Improvements in technology
- Partnerships
- Cleaning up UST releases next year and beyond

A copy of the Article can be downloaded [here](#).