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Controlling UST Cleanup Costs

Fact Sheet 4: Managing The Process

Playing Your Part

You are both a supervisor and a customer when managing a site assessment or cleanup. As a supervisor, you need to know how to get the best cleanup for your money. You can find this out by studying a copy of your State's regulations on Underground Storage Tank (UST) cleanups, which are available from your State UST program. Most States have a fund to help UST owners pay for cleaning up tank leaks. The fund is generally managed by the State Fund Administrator. Check with your State Fund Administrator to see if you're eligible to receive these funds and to learn about other requirements (for example, invoices).

As the supervisor, you manage the contractor; don't let the contractor manage you. Your contractors should have demonstrated their understanding of State UST regulations during the bidding process. But by knowing the regulations yourself, you can ensure that your cleanup will meet State standards and increase your chances of payment from the State Fund. You can help yourself even more by reminding the contractor to stick to the scope of work and by inspecting the site while work is being done as often as possible.

As a customer, you can expect work to be completed for the agreed upon price or some reasonable approximation of that price. Pay more attention to what's being done than to the rates being charged. Paying high rates for necessary work is more valuable than paying low rates for unnecessary work.

Keep an eye on tasks that contractors tend to overdo. Check with your State Fund or UST program to see if they limit the following activities:

- Excavating and hauling soil
- Sending soil and water samples to the lab for testing
- Installing monitoring wells

Controlling Costs

As a supervisor and as a customer, you are responsible for keeping costs in line. When weighing the numbers:

- **Know:** What the State Fund for USTs will or will not pay for. Question the contractor on the need to perform certain tasks and on the prices for tasks.

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- **Check:** With your State UST program to see if it has a schedule of reasonable rates for standard site assessment and cleanup procedures.

- **Require:** Contractors to get your written permission to perform tasks not included in the scope of work.

- **Visit:** The site regularly and question the need for on-site personnel and equipment, especially if they are not working. Make some unannounced visits.

- **Investigate:** New methods of treating soil on-site as opposed to hauling soil off-site for treatment or disposal. Your State UST program may have requirements about this.

- **Account For:** All costs and services and get dates on all invoices. Your State Fund Administrator may need dated forms and invoices to process your request for payment.

- **Scrutinize:** Your bill with your contractor. Compare the prices for projected work to the charges for completed work; make sure everything is justified.

- **Make Sure:** Expensive senior staff aren't doing work that less experienced staff could perform, for example, soil sampling. Ensure that staff with the necessary skills are carrying out the work.

Documentation

Ask the contractor to keep a daily log of activities that can be inspected upon request. This protects you from being overcharged, and it provides information for the State Fund Administrator should questions arise about your claims for payment.

Require invoices on a regular basis. Sit down with your contractor and go over the first invoice to make sure you both understand what is required. Feel free to ask your contractor to justify questionable charges. The need for good detailed invoices can't be overstated.

And Remember: The sooner a spill is cleaned up, the better. The longer you wait, the more the damage will spread and the more the cleanup will cost.

Fact Sheet 4 was developed by the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Underground Storage Tanks in conjunction with State Fund Administrators. It is one of a series; the others are: *Hiring a Contractor, Negotiating the Contract, Interpreting the Bill,* and *Understanding Contractor Code Words.* For copies of these fact sheets or more information, contact your State Fund Administrator for USTs and/or your State Underground Storage Tank program.