



Department of Commerce

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SELECTING AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT

Investigating and cleaning up a petroleum release can be expensive. You can control the cost by selecting a qualified and experienced consultant. Underground Storage Tank (UST) Owners and Operators are required to have insurance through the Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Release Compensation Board (the Petro Board). If you plan to submit a reimbursement claim to the Petro Board, it will be necessary to keep certain records to document the costs. If you select an unqualified or inexperienced consultant, your costs might be unnecessarily high, and the Petro Board may reject part of your claim as a result. This fact sheet provides some basic guidelines for selecting an environmental consultant to help you accomplish your clean up in cost-effective way. This sheet does not, however, include an exhaustive set of questions; there is no foolproof method of selection, but the guidelines may prove helpful.

It is important to remember that the Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulations (BUSTR) does not license environmental consultants. BUSTR does certify individuals to install, remove and make major repairs to underground storage tanks, but a certified installer is not required to have any knowledge of how to clean up a petroleum release. While some certified installers are also environmental consultants, many are not.

EVALUATING CONSULTING COMPANIES

Once you have reported your petroleum leak or spill, consult the internet, yellow pages or other directories under headings such as an Environmental Services or Underground Storage Tanks. As with any professional service, you will want to compare the qualifications of several firms before deciding to hire. Your decision should be based on various criteria, including: experience and expertise; costs; insurance; and references.

EXPERIENCE/EXPERTISE

Before you hire a consultant, you will want to know if the company has the technical expertise required. Ask the consultants you contact the following questions:

1. Is the firm familiar with BUSTR's UST Closure Assessment and Corrective Action regulations?
2. Does the firm have experience performing petroleum-related cleanups in Ohio?
3. Does the company have experience in the design and installation of monitoring wells?
4. Is the firm familiar with soil and ground water test methods required by BUSTR?
5. Is their staff trained in the use of field instruments and procedures?
6. Does the firm have an established field protocol and chain-of-custody for soil and ground water sampling?
7. Has the firm installed any monitoring wells and/or ground water recovery systems?
8. Is the firm experienced with soil remediation techniques other than digging contaminated soils?
9. How many closure assessments and/or corrective action cleanups have been achieved with BUSTR?
10. Has the firm performed cleanups for which claims have been submitted to the Petro Board?
11. Is the firm familiar with Petro Board rules and procedures for filing claims?
12. Would the firm offer assistance to you in filing your claim?
13. Do the firms' invoices list in detail the work, activity or procedures performed?

COSTS

The consultant should provide an estimate of anticipated project costs and an itemized fee schedule. Be wary, however, of any consultant who guarantees a total clean-up at a set price because the full extent of contamination at a site is rarely known before work begins. Find out how you will be billed for subcontracted work.

INSURANCE

You should request information on the consultants and subcontractors insurance coverage. Do not contract with a company unless it has liability and workers compensation coverage. Find out what the coverage encompasses. If a company is self-insured, make sure it has adequate resources to cover problems that might occur.

REFERENCES

When researching the qualifications of consultants, request complete lists of the company's clients in your county or region and all cleanups in Ohio which were submitted to the Petro Board for reimbursement. Contact some of the consultant's clients in your area or industry and ask:

1. What was the size and scope of the project?
2. Did the consultant meet the stated work project deadlines?
3. Did the consultant keep them informed of project developments and available options?
4. Were they satisfied with the work?
5. Have they submitted their claim to the Petro Board?
6. Has the claim been reviewed?
7. Did the Petro Board disallow any of the costs?

You may also want to contact any professional organizations you belong to or other businesses in your industry for references.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Ideally, when you need a consultant for site investigation and cleanup work, you will have time to take the steps outlined in this fact sheet. However, in the event of an emergency, you may require the services of a consultant until the situation is stabilized. Under these circumstances, you won't have much time, but do try to obtain the names of several references and contact them before making a commitment. If you are unsatisfied with a consultant's handling of the emergency, do not feel obligated to retain the company for the remainder of the site investigation and cleanup.

It's difficult to be fully prepared for everything that could happen, but you may want to keep a list of consultants who have a good reputation based on recommendations from your business and professional colleagues.

When you believe that a suspected or confirmed release has occurred in Ohio, contact BUSTR's Corrective Action Unit within 24 hours at (800) 686-2878 or (614) 752-7938 to report the incident.

For additional information, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and Ohio Department of Health maintain websites at www.epa.state.oh.us, www.dnr.state.oh.us, and www.odh.ohio.gov, respectively.

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