

UST Program Celebrates 20th Anniversary

The year 2004 marks the 20th anniversary of the federal Underground Storage Tanks Program. In 1983, the CBS program 60 Minutes aired a story called "Check the Water", which brought national attention to families suffering from the effects of gasoline leaking from underground storage tanks at gas stations and other places. Less than one year later, on November 8, 1984, President Reagan signed into law legislation designed to protect the public from these petroleum releases.

In the 20 years that have passed, more than 1.5 million old, unsafe tanks have closed; almost 300,000 petroleum leaks have been cleaned up; nearly all underground tanks have been upgraded or replaced; and newly discovered leaks have dropped dramatically, from a high of over 66,000 in 1990 to roughly 12,000 last year.

US EPA recently released the End-of-Year Activity Report^{i[1]} representing the cumulative totals of "Corrective Action Performance Measures Data" (through September 30, 2003). The report includes data on the number of active and closed tanks, releases reported, and cleanups initiated and completed as reported by each state. How does Ohio compare to the rest of the nation and, perhaps more importantly, to its neighbors in Region 5^{ii[2]}?

Nationally, Ohio ranks 9th in the number of active tanks, 5th in the number of confirmed releases, and 2nd in the number of cleanups completed. This last figure is even more impressive if viewed as a percentage. Out of the top ten states in the number of confirmed releases, Ohio trails only New York percentage wise in the number of cleanups completed – 85% to 83%. The national average of confirmed releases to cleanups completed is 69%.

In Region 5, Ohio ranks 1st in the number of active tanks, 1st in the number of confirmed releases, and 1st in the number of cleanups initiated and completed. Only Minnesota, with 13,576 fewer confirmed releases, has a higher percentage of releases to cleanups – 93% to 83% - than Ohio. The regional average of confirmed releases to cleanups completed is 69%.

Nationally, Region 5 is 2nd in the number of active tanks, 2nd in confirmed releases, and 2nd in cleanups completed. Region 4^{iii[3]} is 1st in each of these categories.

Please see the chart below for national and regional and Region 5 state totals.

	Active Tanks	Closed Tanks	Confirmed Releases	Cleanups Initiated	Cleanups Completed	% Releases to Cleanups Completed
National Total	682,870	1,569,156	439,385	403,558	303,120	69%
Region 5	113,037	289,661	99,625	94,910	68,757	69%
Ohio	25,049	40,516	22,819	22,440	19,022	83%
Illinois	23,526	60,612	21,723	20,232	12,743	59%
Michigan	21,862	62,839	20,058	19,690	8,923	56%
Indiana	14,399	34,291	7,919	6,843	4,154	52%
Wisconsin	14,212	63,383	17,863	17,064	13,380	77%
Minnesota	13,989	28,020	9,243	8,641	7,873	93%

i[1] This report can be found in its entirety at www.epa.gov/oust.

ii[2] Region 5 includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

iii[3] Region 4 includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.