

Drinking Water Source Protection and Leaking Underground Storage Tanks

Ohio's environmental regulations help protect the quality of our drinking water by establishing standards for cleanup after a leak from an underground storage tank.

Who regulates these activities?

Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Ground Waters (DDAGW) regulates public water systems. DDAGW also administers the Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) program, which determines the protection area surrounding a drinking water source. Ohio EPA has evaluated all Ohio public water systems to identify and outline these protection areas.

The State Fire Marshal's Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulations (BUSTR) oversees the cleanup of most leaking underground storage tanks containing petroleum products. The program helps ensure cleanups conducted near source water protection areas are protective of the drinking water source.

What if there is a leak?

When an underground storage tank (UST) leak occurs, the UST owner or operator conducts an initial site investigation to assess the extent of contamination. If this initial investigation indicates that the level of soil or water contamination requires action to keep drinking water safe for consumption, the UST owner or operator conducts a more detailed assessment of the spill. BUSTR determines to what extent the contaminants have affected the soil and ground water.

The UST owner or operator must determine if the site is located in a drinking water source protection area for a public water system. The UST owner or operator, in consultation with BUSTR, establishes cleanup standards for the contamination site to ensure any source of drinking water is protected and continues to be safe for consumption.

If the UST is determined to be within 1,500 feet of a drinking water source protection area for a public water system, ground water located under this site is automatically classified as drinking water. If this pathway exists from the UST to a public drinking water well, the cleanup standards may be more stringent.

Which underground storage tanks are regulated?

BUSTR oversees the cleanup of leaks from USTs used to store most petroleum products. A few exceptions are:

- heating oil USTs used for on-site heating;
- farm and residential USTs smaller than 1,100 gallons; and
- abandoned USTs with an unknown owner, origin and/or contents.

These exceptions are not regulated. U.S. EPA oversees the cleanup if the UST contains a hazardous substance.



In Ohio, cleanup standards for a leaking underground storage tank will be more stringent if it is located within 2,000 feet of a drinking water source protection area for a community or non-transient, non-community water system. (Photo source: Ohio State Fire Marshal, Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulations).

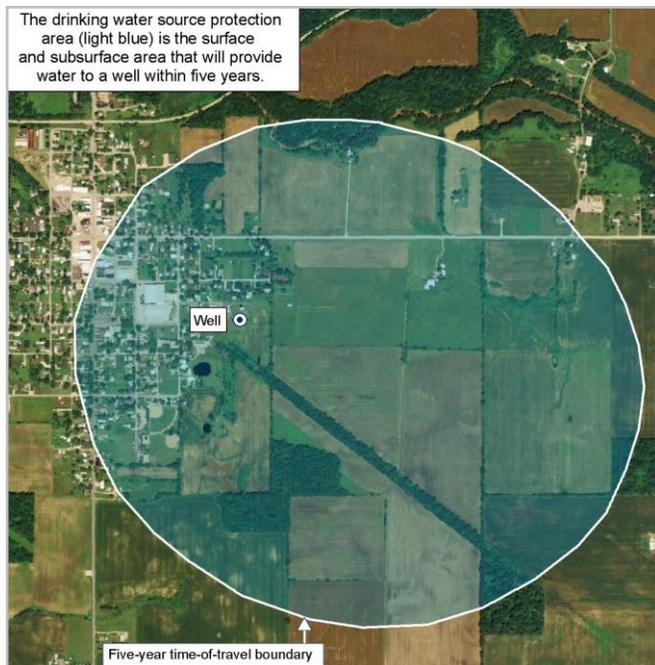
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How does regulation of underground storage tanks protect drinking water?

Determining the site's location in relation to drinking water source protection areas provides some of the necessary information to ensure cleanup standards protect the water source. This helps ensure drinking water is safe for consumption without additional treatment.

Where are drinking water source protection areas?

To determine if an existing or proposed facility is located within a drinking water source protection area, Ohio EPA has developed a mapping application that will enable you to locate source water protection areas. The application is available online as a Quick Link on the SWAP webpage at epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/swap.aspx. You can also contact Ohio EPA's SWAP program by emailing us at the address listed below. Please include the location of the existing or proposed facility (a map showing the location is best), the reason for your request (such as: Tier 1 evaluation), and your contact information, including your email address.



Additional Information

- State Fire Marshal, Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulations, com.ohio.gov/fire/BUSTRResources.aspx.
- Technical Guidance Manual for Closure, Corrective Action, and Petroleum Contaminated Soil Rules, com.ohio.gov/documents/fire_2017_Technical_Guidance_Manual.pdf.
- Petroleum Underground Storage Tanks (UST) Corrective Actions, Ohio Administrative Code 1301:7-9, codes.ohio.gov/oac/1301:7-9.

Contact

For more information, contact Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Ground Waters, Source Water Assessment and Protection program, at (614) 644-2752, or email whp@epa.ohio.gov. Visit the SWAP webpage at epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/swap.aspx.

This fact sheet is intended to provide an overview of this program as it relates to drinking water source protection and the SWAP program. The activities or structures described have additional restrictions not discussed in this document. When investigating state or federal programs for information about source water protection, please consult with staff from that particular program for the most complete and current information.