

Taking the Leap of Faith

Learning to Trust the “Other Guy”

Presented by Ted Unkles

UST Program Coordinator

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Common Attitudes

- Regulator: “This business is trying to cheat and violate our regulations.”
- Tank Owner/Operator: “This crazy, out-of-control bureaucrat is not interested in helping anyone – s/he wants to fine me!”



Historically, those attitudes were (sometimes) justified

- An inspector (from a different program) once told me “I always look for – and I always find – a violation!”
- A principal in a company that operates ~35 C-stores in Vermont once told an inspector, “You’re violating our constitutional Rights – this inspection is an unreasonable search and seizure!”

When things go really wrong.....

- Tank owner was replacing USTs in preparation for the 1998 deadline. Tanks and pipes always passed their tightness tests, but there was extensive contamination.
- Tank owner thought (incorrectly) that the cleanup would not be eligible for Vermont's Petroleum Cleanup Fund.
- Tank owner was very unnerved; our inspector misinterpreted his attitude as a refusal to cooperate.
- Inspector insisted on cooperation; tank owner threatened to kill the inspector.
- State Police had to be called in; things got very ugly.

Getting locked in this mindset is comfortable, but it's unproductive



What happens when we change our attitude?

- We stop wasting our time and effort!
- We get more done.
- We achieve better compliance.
- The environment benefits.

How to get there?

- Take the leap into the great unknown.
- How will we know when we get there?
 - We won't – it's a never-ending process.

Start Small

- Outreach & education can yield huge rewards
 - New Owner “inspections.”
 - UST Program newsletter, with staff contact info easily visible.
 - Speaking at trade association meetings.



UST TALK

A Newsletter for Underground Storage Tank Owners (UST) / Operators
Published by Waste Management & Prevention Division

Agency of Natural Resources
Department of Environmental Conservation
Waste Management & Prevention Division
Underground Storage Tank Program
1 National Life Drive, Davis 1, Montpelier, Vermont 05620-3704
Telephone: (802) 828-1138



UST Staff					
Jaymi Cleland—917-1386 Jaymi.Cleland@vermont.gov	June Reilly-522-0231 June.Reilly@vermont.gov	Tim Cropley—249-5346 Tim.Cropley@vermont.gov	Marc Roy- 522-0275 Marc.Roy@vermont.gov	Susan Thayer-522-0487 Susan.Thayer@vermont.gov	Ted Unkles -522-0488 Ted.Unkles@vermont.gov

Petroleum Cleanup Fund’s Richard E. Barnes recognition!

Richard (Dick) E. Barnes of the A.R. Sandri Company has been recognized by Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin for his long-term service to the state of Vermont as a member of the state’s Petroleum Cleanup Fund Advisory Committee. Barnes, who also chairs the Vermont Petroleum Association’s Executive Committee, retired last month from A.R. Sandri, Inc., a petroleum distributor operating in Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts and headquartered in Greenfield, Mass.



Photo of Richard E. Barnes and Chuck Schwer

The letter of recognition signed by the governor was presented during a meeting of the committee on Tuesday, September 13, by Chuck Schwer, Director of the Waste Management & Prevention Division, Department of Environmental Conservation, who managed the state’s sites management section (SMS) before he was promoted a year ago.

healthy retirement.” The Vermont PCF Advisory Committee is comprised of government officials and representatives of the petroleum industry. It meets several times per year to review the status of the PCF and its effectiveness in meeting the goals of the fund, which are to protect human health and the environment from petroleum contamination caused by leaking USTs.

The problem of leaking steel tanks was first identified across the country in the early 1980s, and Vermont adopted UST management standards beginning in 1986. The Vermont industry was the first in the nation to meet all state and federal requirements for tank upgrades by December, 1998, and received the Environmental Merit Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Earth Day in 1999 to recognize its successful public/private partnership.

Barnes has spent 51 years working in the petroleum industry. He lives with his wife in Hinsdale, N.H.

So now everything's perfect, right?

- Not Quite.....
- In Vermont we're still stuck with the 80/20 rule: 80% of our tank owners demand 20% of our time and attention.
- The remaining 20%: They are still a challenge.
- We're still working on improving our relationship with our regulated community.
- It's a never-ending process.

Thank You

Ted Unkles
Coordinator, UST Program
Vermont Department of
Environmental
Conservation
Ted.unkles@Vermont.gov

Photo: Lake Willoughby,
northeastern Vermont

