



REPORTING PETROLEUM RELEASES FROM UST SYSTEMS

Reporting Promptly Protects the Public and the Environment

Suspected and Confirmed Releases and Reporting Requirements

Iowa law requires owners and operators of UST systems to report a confirmed or suspected release of “regulated substances,” which includes petroleum, to the DNR within 24 hours or within 6 hours if a hazardous condition exists [[567 Iowa Administrative Code \(IAC\)—135.6](#) & [Iowa Code section 455B.386](#)]. Always report a suspected or confirmed release to your insurance company to file a claim and preserve coverage.

Suspected Release

Even though there is no obvious visual or olfactory evidence of a release—such as stained soils or a strong hydrocarbon odor—the presence of other indicators may suggest a release has occurred from the UST system. Below are examples of conditions qualifying as a “suspected release”:

- Vapor or product is detected in vapor monitoring or groundwater monitoring wells used for leak detection
- Inventory control discrepancies indicate that a release may have occurred (a gain or loss of product greater than 130 gallons + 1% of throughput)
- Alarms from automatic tank gauging (ATG) systems, interstitial monitors, sump sensors, automatic line leak detector, etc., indicate that a release may have occurred
- Statistical inventory reconciliation (SIR) results indicate either a *Fail* or two consecutive *Inconclusive*
- Unexplained loss of product
- Unexplained presence of water in the tank or sump
- Product dispensing equipment does not dispense product or dispenses product at a greatly reduced rate
- Internal tank (periodic) inspection results reveal perforations, corrosion holes, weld failures, or other similar defects

Suspected Release Investigation

Owners and operators must immediately investigate and confirm suspected releases. Make sure the monitoring device that declared a release is not defective and giving false indications of a release. If it is defective, get it recalibrated, repaired or replaced immediately and make sure subsequent monitoring shows no release. Your petroleum equipment service company is able to help you diagnose whether there is a problem with your monitoring equipment and whether the suspected release can be confirmed.

If the monitoring equipment is found to be operating properly, the suspected release or confirmed release must be reported to the DNR by phone or fax within 24 hours. Make sure to contact the [DNR’s 24 Hour Environmental Emergency Reporting Hotline](#) (also called Spill Reporting Hotline) if the release creates a hazardous condition (see *What is a Hazardous Condition Requiring Reporting within 6 Hours?* below). You should also contact your UST insurance company to inform them you have a suspected or confirmed release.

- Shut down the submersible pump for the product line if you suspect a release from the product piping (slow flow, failed test results, positive shutoff, alarm, etc.)
- Shut down the submersible pump and empty the tank if a sudden loss of product occurs from the tank or if test results indicate a “Fail”
- If there is a suspected release that cannot be explained due to defective monitoring equipment or the source of the release is unknown or uncertain, regulations require you to test your UST system to confirm if a leak has occurred. You must proceed with system tightness testing, which can detect a release at least as small as 0.1 gph

in the tanks and/or product lines

- If the precision test results are “Fail,” a site investigation may be necessary. The DNR will issue a letter requiring a site check. You must repair or replace defective equipment if the test indicates a leak has occurred in the system. Submit documentation of the repair or replacement to the DNR (e.g., invoice, 148 form, and installation checklist if necessary)

Confirmed Release and Reporting Requirements

A release can be confirmed when based on visual and olfactory observations it is evident that petroleum or other regulated substances have breached the UST system or come in contact with the surface material (concrete/asphalt), backfill material, soil, groundwater or surface water or the system monitoring has confirmed a leak in the UST system that cannot be observed.

The owner or operator must report the release to the DNR within 24 hours or six hours if a hazardous condition exists (see *What is a Hazardous Condition Requiring Reporting within 6 Hours?* below). Environmental evidence of a confirmed release includes:

- Soil or groundwater sample analytical results for any petroleum constituent exceed the DNR’s action levels [\[567—135.14\]](#)
- There is a spill or overfill from the UST system
- There is an affected receptor (e.g., petroleum discovered in a utility trench, which can be attributed to the UST facility or the UST facility cannot be ruled out as a source)
- Drinking water supplies are contaminated, which can be attributed to the UST facility or the UST facility cannot be ruled out as a source
- Vapors are observed in buildings or structures which can be attributed to the UST facility or the UST facility cannot be ruled out as a source
- Free product is observed in the environment or in monitoring well used for release detection or LUST monitoring
- Stained soil is observed
- A sheen is observed on surface water

Exceptions

An aboveground release of petroleum from a UST facility does not need to be reported to DNR if it is less than 25 gallons, does not create a hazardous condition, does not reach soil, groundwater or surface water, and is cleaned up within 24 hours and the facility retains records of the incident.

An overfill caused by a transporter filling a UST does not need to be reported to DNR if the spill is contained in the spill bucket of the UST and does not reach the backfill. A spill (e.g., a customer who overfills the vehicle’s gas tank) of less than 25 gallons does not need to be reported if it is cleaned up within 24 hours and does not reach soil, groundwater or surface water or create a hazardous condition. If a spill less than 25 gallons cannot be cleaned up within 24 hours, it must be reported.

Confirmed Release Investigation

After reporting the confirmed release, take immediate action to prevent the spread of the release and danger to the public (e.g., fire, vapor and explosion hazards).

- If the public is in danger from a spill or overfill, immediately contact [DNR’s 24 Hour Environmental Emergency Reporting Hotline](#) and the local enforcement authority
- Shut down the pump for the suspected tank or product line
- Investigate for free product in sumps and in under dispenser containment (UDC). Be mindful that you are investigating for the presence of flammable or combustible liquids. Avoid contact with the substance, and keep any ignition sources out of the area

If the source of the release is the tank, contact your petroleum equipment service provider to have the tank emptied and to further investigate the problem. Upon receipt of the [UST Release Report Form \(DNR Form 542-1310\)](#), the DNR will complete a Preliminary Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Report, the information will be entered into the

[DNR Tanks database](#), and the owner/operator will receive a letter requiring a Risk Based Corrective Action (RBCA) assessment.

What is a Hazardous Condition Requiring Reporting within 6 Hours?

A hazardous condition is defined in [567 IAC—131.1](#) and means any situation where a suspected or actual release of a hazardous substance, such as petroleum, places the health and safety of the public or the environment in danger.

Examples of a hazardous condition are:

- Product floating on the groundwater in the tank pit or in a monitoring well
- A sheen of product on a lake, in a stream or a river
- Product discovered in a sump, a monitoring well, or in the UDC
- Product spilled onto the ground
- Vapors or product present in a building, sewer or utility line

In any of these situations, imminent or potential danger exists to the public or the environment and must be reported immediately.

An overfill that occurs during product delivery *and which is not contained by the spill bucket* must be reported immediately by the transporter (See [567 IAC—135.6\(4\)](#) and [567 IAC—131.1](#)). A release of a hazardous substance must be reported within 6 hours. Ultimately, the owner and operator of the tank system must ensure the release is reported.

Releases of petroleum from non-regulated sources such as heating oil tanks, aboveground storage tanks, and farm and residential tanks must also be reported to DNR within 6 hours if a hazardous condition exists. To report a release, contact [DNR's 24 Hour Environmental Emergency Reporting Hotline](#), the [DNR field office](#) in the region where the release occurred, and the [UST Section](#) at the DNR central office.

- Spill Reporting: (24-hour phone) 515-725-8694
- DNR Field Offices: www.iowadnr.gov/about/environmental-field-offices



Field Office	Phone	Fax	Area of State
1 - Manchester	563-927-2640	563-927-2075	NE
2 - Mason City	641-424-4073	641-424-9342	NC
3 - Spencer	712-262-4177	712-262-2901	NW
4 - Atlantic	712-243-1934	712-243-6251	SW
5 - Des Moines	515-725-0268	515-725-8201	SC
6 - Washington	319-653-2135	319-653-2856	SW

UST Central Office phone number is 515-725-8200 and fax number is 515-725-8201.

Use the [UST Release Report Form](#) (DNR Form 542-1310) to fax within 24 hours or 6 hours. Release reporting and all other UST forms can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/environmental-protection/land-quality/underground-storage-tanks/underground-storage-tank-forms.

It is Good Business to Report: Don't Make a Release More Expensive or Complicated

Reporting suspected and confirmed releases promptly as required and as soon as it is known not only protects the public and the environment, but can save the owner/operator money and lower cleanup costs. When a release is reported in a timely manner and the release investigation is begun quickly, further spread of the contamination can be prevented. With any hazardous substance release, safety is the primary concern. While it is important to make every effort to stop the release and perform the actions discussed earlier, do not delay notification to the fire department.

Report suspected and confirmed releases to your insurance company. Your pollution liability insurer requires you to report a release to them as soon as possible. Report the release to preserve your coverage.