



GDOT Publications

Policies & Procedures

Policy: 5525-1- Underground Storage Tank and Hazardous Waste Site Investigation Procedure

Section: Environmental Testing

Office/Department: Office of Materials and Research

Reports To: Division of Construction

Contact: 404-363-7500

In the course of project development it is not unusual to find that a project is routed through an area once home to facilities such as: service stations, automotive repair shops, automotive bone yards, waste segregation sites, waste piles, land fills, treatment plants and outfalls, oil, plastics, chemical, electrical, electronic, adhesives manufacturing plants, photo, printing, paint, plating, battery shops, metals and paper processing plants, mining, agriculture, medical supply facilities, funeral homes, dry cleaning and other cleaning operations, older buildings with structural asbestos or other contaminants, etc. Such areas should be treated as suspected hazardous waste (HW) sites and must be thoroughly investigated to determine conclusively that hazardous waste is not present before any right-of-way is purchased. In addition, should an underground storage tank (UST) system for the purpose of gasoline, diesel, heating oil, or other chemicals exist within the existing or proposed right-of-way, removal of the tanks must be properly addressed prior to purchasing the right-of-way.

Because the Department owns and leases property, it may find itself subject to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA Title III) and Georgia's Hazardous Waste Site Response Act (HWSR) commonly known as State Superfund. Georgia's Superfund established a fund to clean up uncontrolled hazardous waste landfills and to respond to releases into the environment. It created a process for identifying potential responsible parties and ordering them to take appropriate actions. The Department may face this liability once it becomes the owner of a site from which there has been a release, or threat of a release, of a hazardous substance. Regardless of whether the contamination is the result of the Department's actions or the actions of others, the Department may be held responsible for cleaning up any resulting contamination once such property is in the Department's ownership. The risks of possible liability can be significantly reduced by preventative steps taken prior to acquisition of any property suspected to contain hazardous waste.

Basic Procedure

The following outlines the basic procedure of a UST/HW site investigation during the preconstruction phase of a project:

- The Project Manager requests a UST/HW field reconnaissance from the appropriate District Environmental Office.
- Based on information gathered during field reconnaissance, the District Environmentalist completes a UST/HW site investigation package and sends it to the Environmental Testing Unit of the Office of Materials and Research (OMR).

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- The Environmental Testing Unit performs the UST/HW site screening and distributes a report to other involved offices and recommends avoidance or acquisition based on the screening results. All courses of action will follow Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Georgia’s Environmental Protection Division (EPD) guidelines.

Delineation of Responsibilities

The responsibilities of each involved office are delineated below. Generally, all property where there is a potential for hazardous waste contamination or an operational or abandoned UST within the proposed or existing right-of-way must be investigated prior to acquisition.

A. Project Managers

During project development, Project Managers are responsible for the following:

- 1. A UST/HW site investigation is requested for all projects for which new right-of-way will be purchased. Investigations should also be requested for projects in which existing right-of-way will have ditching or utility work adjacent to possible UST or hazardous waste sites. These projects include, but are not limited to, those being managed by Road, Urban, Consultant or District Design, Location, or Traffic Safety.**
- 2. Upon establishing the proposed right-of-way limits, the Project Manager transmits a written request for a UST/HW site investigation to the District Environmental Office. A copy of this request should be sent to the Office of Right-of-Way and Office of Environment and Location (OEL) to notify them of the investigation.**
- 3. In addition to the written request, provide the District Environmental Office with half-size preliminary plan layouts (two copies) which should include the existing and proposed right-of-way lines, known property owner information, and any known UST/HW locations.**
- 4. If the UST/HW site investigation is to be performed by a consultant, the Project Manager transmits a copy of the final UST/HW site investigation report to OMR for review.**

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5. After OMR has reviewed the consultant report and deemed it acceptable for use during design, right-of-way negotiations and construction, the project manager is responsible for distributing the report to the appropriate offices with a letter of acceptance. These offices include District Environmental Office, Office of Right-of-Way, Office of Environment/Location, and District Right-of-Way offices. A copy of the summary cover letter should also be sent to the Director of Preconstruction.
6. Any recommendations made by OMR regarding UST/HW sites should be addressed during final plan preparation.
7. Include in the final construction contracts any special provisions provided by OMR required to deal with contamination issues.

B. District Environmental Offices

During project development, District Environmental Offices are responsible for the following:

1. Upon receipt of written request from a Project Manager, review plans for proposed right-of-way acquisition, and prioritize the requests.
2. Conduct field reconnaissance and investigative research in order to locate all UST/HW sites and accurately locate such sites within proposed and existing right-of-way. Such investigations include riding and walking the project for visual indications of UST systems or potential hazardous waste sites.
3. Talk to property owners, employees or neighbors for information about UST/HW locations and current or previous owners. Check with the local tax assessor's office to verify property owner information. Check for UST systems on the EPD Confirmed Release List. Check for HW sites on EPD Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) website for Enforcement Actions or Violations in the past 2 years.
4. Measure distance from any UST caps or hazardous waste sources to landmarks or the bordering roads. Mark the site on one set of plans and on a location map and take an identifying photo.

5. Prepare a completed UST/HW site investigation request package (a copy of the UST & HW investigation request sheets are attached) and transmit to the Environmental Testing Branch of OMR; a copy of the transmittal letter and the completed UST/HW forms should be sent to the Project Manager, the Office of Right-of-Way and OEL. The completed UST/HW site investigation request package should also contain: A) Complete information sheet for each site; B) Detailed plan sheet indicating the required right-of-way; C) Project location map.
6. When no UST/HW sites are found, and therefore no further UST/HW investigation is needed on a project, written notification to that effect should be sent to the Project Manager, with a copy to OMR, the Office of Right-of-Way and OEL.
7. Assist other offices with the completion of UST/HW site investigation request packages, as requested.

C. Materials and Research

The Environmental Testing Unit of the Office of Materials and Research personnel are responsible for the following:

1. Upon receipt of site investigation packages or other requests for UST/HW investigation, check for completeness, and prioritize the requests.
2. Screen for contamination and document UST/HW sites as requested; such investigations may include site inspections, drilling, and analyzing groundwater and/or soil samples, as necessary.
3. Research EPD and EPA records for pertinent information on UST and hazardous waste sites.
4. Prepare reports with screening results and the extent of contamination or existence of UST systems within the Department's proposed and existing rights-of-way and make appropriate recommendations. Transmit report to the Project Manager, with a copy to the District Environmental Office, Office of Right-of-Way, Office of Environment/Location, and District Right-of-Way offices. A copy of the summary cover letter should also be sent to the Director of Preconstruction.

5. Review consultant reports for UST/HW site investigations. If the report is acceptable for use in design, right-of-way negotiations and construction, a letter of acceptance will be transmitted to the Project Manager. If the report is insufficient, incomplete or needs revisions, written notification will be transmitted to the Project Manager.

6. Review consultant Special Encroachment Reports. If report is acceptable, a copy is kept in our files and the other copies are transmitted to the District Engineer, District Access Management Engineer, and State Traffic Safety and Design Engineer.

7. In some cases, contamination levels are found to be above release notification requirements as established by EPD and EPA. When this occurs, the Environmental Testing Unit issues letters to EPD and the property/tank owner informing them of the Department's findings.

8. Act as liaison between the Department and EPD and EPA, as necessary.

9. Coordinate any mitigation or clean-up activities which might be required as a part of the construction contract due to unavoidable or unexpected involvement with a hazardous waste site.

D. Right-of-way

During project development, Right-of-Way personnel are responsible for the following:

1. Where UST/HW sites exist, there will be no right-of-way purchase until the property has been properly screened for contamination by OMR.

2. Any recommendations made by OMR regarding UST/HW sites should be addressed during right-of-way appraisal and acquisition.

3. Coordinate any UST closures which might be required as a part of the right-of-way negotiations utilizing a qualified consultant and adhering to the following outline: If a UST is not located within the right-of-way purchased, but is determined not to be functional after purchase, the appraisal is to include a UST closure cost since the owner is responsible for its removal. If a UST is totally or partially

located in the required right-of-way, the Department will remove them at no cost to the previous owner.

4. If previously unreported UST/HW sites are discovered during right-of-way appraisal and acquisition, the Environmental Testing Branch of OMR shall be requested to perform a site investigation for contamination.

E. Construction and Maintenance

During project implementation, Construction and Maintenance personnel are responsible for the following:

1. Follow proper protocol for all UST and hazardous waste sites indicated on plans or in construction contracts.
2. Stop work in the immediate vicinity of newly discovered/suspected UST or hazardous waste sites. Areas where suspected contamination exists should be closed off to prevent inadvertent access by the public.
3. Report the discovery of suspected UST or hazardous waste sites to OMR.
4. Guidance for removal of solid waste including hazardous waste is provided in the Standard Specification Section 215.
5. Guidance for removal of a UST system is provided in Standard Specification Section 217.
6. Assist OMR with the coordination of any mitigation or clean-up which might be required as a part of the construction contract because of unavoidable or unexpected involvement with a hazardous waste site.
7. Assist Right-of-Way with the coordination of any UST closures which might be required as a part of the construction contract.

References:

None.

History:

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