# USPS OIG: Underground Storage Tanks

*February 6, 2019* — **Objective**

Our objective was to assess the Postal Service’s effectiveness in managing its underground storage tank (UST) program.

As of May 2018, the Postal Service had 145 active and 35 inactive tanks in the UST program. Active USTs contain fuel (gasoline and diesel) to power generators and its fleet of vehicles. USTs are designated as inactive when the tank is no longer economically viable to keep in place and operating, it is not sufficiently used to keep operating, or it is no longer needed.

The UST program, which is managed by the Office of Sustainability, provides on-site compliance and repair support for all Postal Service installations with USTs. As part of the program, active USTs are inspected, tested, and monitored to ensure they function properly and comply with Postal Service policy and federal and respective state requirements. UST operators are responsible for operating and maintaining USTs. UST operators are categorized as Class A, B, or C. Class A and B operators are responsible for overall UST operations, and Class C operators are responsible for dispensing fuel and responding to UST alarms.

In fiscal year (FY) 2014, the Postal Service approved $44.4 million for the removal and replacement of 276 active USTs. As of June 2018, the Postal Service spent $33.8 million to remove and replace 187 tanks. We judgmentally selected 45 active tanks based on age, location, and type, and assessed the areas of inspections, testing, and monitoring. Additionally, we reviewed 14 tanks identified for removal or replacement to determine viability of removal or replacement. Our scope period was UST activities from October 2016 through March 2018.

**What the OIG Found**

The Postal Service effectively managed UST program components related to testing, monitoring, removal, and replacement. However, the Postal Service can improve oversight of UST inspections and operator training. We identified that:

* Operators did not conduct monthly inspections for 62 percent (28 of 45) of the USTs reviewed.
* Operators did not conduct required daily inspections for 64 percent (seven of 11) of the USTs reviewed.
* Fifty-three percent (56 of 106) of Class C operators did not complete the required annual refresher training course in FY 2017.
* Forty-two percent (49 of 117) of Class C operators did not complete the required annual refresher training course in FY 2018.

UST inspections were not consistently conducted in accordance with policy due to a lack of oversight in the current process. Annual refresher training was not at 100 percent compliance because there is not a validation mechanism to ensure all required training is completed.

When inspections are not conducted as required, there is an increased risk that equipment problems will not be detected timely and, therefore, not receive maintenance attention before escalating into more serious issues.

When annual refresher training is not completed, Class C operators miss opportunities to reinforce policies, procedures, and requirements to ensure compliance.

**What the OIG Recommended**

We recommended management establish oversight mechanisms to ensure adherence to policies and procedures relating to UST inspections and UST operator annual refresher training requirements.

[**Read full report**](https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/document-library-files/2018/HR-AR-19-001.pdf)

Thank You

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