



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General sought to determine how the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ensures that the quality of compliance inspections at underground storage tanks (USTs) is protective of public health and the environment. Preventing releases through regular tank inspections and maintenance is key to protecting public health and the environment. According to the Office of Underground Storage Tanks (OUST), the greatest potential threat from a leaking UST is contamination of groundwater, the source of drinking water for nearly half of all Americans.

Background

There are nearly 600,000 USTs in the United States. EPA annually grants \$34.5 million to states, tribes, and territories to implement UST inspection and compliance programs. All states determine compliance with UST regulations through compliance inspections.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Affairs at (202) 566-2391.

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2012/20120215-12-P-0289.pdf

Controls Over State Underground Storage Tank Inspection Programs in EPA Regions Generally Effective

What We Found

We determined that EPA regions have management controls to verify the quality of state UST inspections. All three regions where we conducted our review had annually reviewed UST inspection programs to verify compliance with requirements. Further, two of the three regions we reviewed conducted more extensive annual reviews and made recommendations to improve state UST inspection programs.

While we did not find any major deficiencies in the administration of the state UST inspection programs or regional oversight activities, we have one concern about EPA's oversight of state UST inspection programs. The memoranda of agreement (MOAs) between regions and the state UST programs either do not exist or do not reflect changes resulting from the Energy Policy Act of 2005. An MOA is an important management control because it defines the roles and responsibilities between an EPA region and a state.

What We Recommend

We recommend that EPA and states enter into MOAs that reflect program changes from the 2005 Energy Policy Act and address oversight of municipalities conducting inspections. The Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) agreed with our recommendation and we agree that its planned actions meet the intent of the recommendation. Because OSWER did not provide a planned completion date for the corrective action, we consider the recommendation unresolved.