

ROY COOPER

Governor

ELIZABETH S. BISER

Secretary

MICHAEL SCOTT

Director



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

September 21, 2023

TO: Owners and Operators of Regulated Underground Storage Tanks

RE: North Carolina Underground Storage Tank Operator Training Requirements

The Federal Energy Policy Act enacted by Congress in 2005 mandated training for all UST system operators. In North Carolina, there are two types of UST operators who must receive training: Primary Operator (Class A/B) and Emergency Response Operator (Class C).

Primary Operator - defined

Each UST owner must designate one or more Primary Operator for each UST facility. To be designated a Primary Operator, an individual must meet the following criteria:

1. Responsible for day-to-day aspects of operation, maintenance, and record-keeping for the UST system.
2. General knowledge of UST compliance requirements.
3. An employee of the UST owner or the entity operating the facility's USTs; not a third-party contractor.

Primary Operator - training

Primary Operator training is conducted either on-site during a facility's compliance inspection, or online using the North Carolina Learning Center.

On-site Training

A Primary Operator may be trained by an NCDEQ inspector during a compliance inspection only if the facility is in compliance at the time of inspection. At the end of the training, the Primary Operator is given the Operator Regulatory Knowledge Assessment (ORKA). If the operator scores a 75% or better on the ORKA, and if the facility is in compliance, then the operator training requirement is satisfied for that facility. On-site training is site-specific and does not satisfy the Primary Operator training requirement for any other UST facility.

If the Primary Operator does not achieve a score of 75% or better on the ORKA, then a Notice of Violation will be sent to the UST owner with instructions for the Primary Operator to take the online courses for retraining listed at tankschool.ncdenr.gov.

If the facility is not in compliance at the inspection, then the ORKA will not be given, and a Notice of Violation will be sent to the UST owner with instructions for the Primary Operator to



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality | Division of Waste Management
217 West Jones Street | 1646 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1646
919.707.8171

Take Primary Operator Training online at tankschool.ncdenr.gov.

Online Training

Online Primary Operator Training is free and provided by the North Carolina Learning Center and is in accordance with the US EPA requirements for operating and maintaining UST systems. Links to the training can be found at tankschool.ncdenr.gov.

If a Primary Operator achieves a passing score on the test provided by the online training, then the Primary Operator must submit the training certificate (along with a list of UST facility ID numbers that the training applies to) to the UST Section to satisfy the operator training requirement.

Training Certificate

Once the Primary Operator has successfully completed online training, the primary operator can view, print and/or save their certificate of training. No training renewal is required unless:

1. A new Primary Operator is appointed for that facility, or
2. The facility is out of compliance at its next compliance inspection.

In either case above, the Primary Operator is required to complete online training within 30 days the new Primary Operator's start date or within 30 days of receipt of Notice.

The training certificate becomes void for the facility listed if that facility fails a compliance inspection.

Emergency Response Operator - defined

An Emergency Response Operator is an employee who controls or monitors fuels sales and dispensing and is considered the first line of response to events indicating emergency conditions at a facility. A UST owner must designate one or more Emergency Response Operators for each UST facility with "current" or active USTs. Emergency Response Operators are not required at facilities where all USTs are in temporary closure.

Emergency Response Operator - training

If the Emergency Response Operator role will be filled by a trained Primary Operator, no further training is required. However, if any other employee will serve as the Emergency Response Operator, then Emergency Response Operator training must be conducted using one of the following:

1. Training materials issued by the UST Section (including instructions, informational slides, and placard) can be found online at tankschool.ncdenr.gov. Either a trained Primary Operator, or a store manager who is an Emergency Response Operator (trained by a Primary Operator) can conduct Emergency Response Operator training for other employees. The training should follow all the instructions presented in the materials, including posting a placard with contact information for the trained Emergency Response Operator(s) responsible for responding to emergencies and alarms at the facility.
2. An online training tool, if the Primary Operator has verified that the online tool includes all the training requirements that the UST Section Emergency Response Operator training packet covers. Emergency Response Operators should be trained before assuming their responsibilities at a UST facility. Once trained, no training renewals are required.

Attended and Unattended Facilities

There are additional considerations for the Emergency Response Operator requirements depending on whether a facility is considered “attended” or “unattended”.

Attended Facilities

An “attended” facility has a trained Emergency Response Operator present at the facility to respond to emergencies and alarms at the facility at any time a regulated substance can be withdrawn from the UST system. The Emergency Response Operator can be absent for up to 87 consecutive hours (which is equivalent to a three-day weekend) but must be on call during the time of absence from the facility.

At most retail fueling stations, the Emergency Response Operator role is filled by a cashier and/or store manager.

During a compliance inspection, an NCDEQ inspector will verify that a placard is posted in the dispensing area. The placard must display contact information for the trained Emergency Response Operator on call for responding to emergencies and alarms at facilities where dispensing can occur when the emergency response operator is absent during the above listed time period.

Unattended Facilities

A facility is considered “unattended” if the Emergency Response Operator is ABSENT from the facility for more than 87 consecutive hours. An “unattended” facility must have an automated notification system installed which is capable of immediately transmitting information from the UST system to a trained Emergency Response Operator at all times.

The type of information required to be transmitted to the emergency response operator depends on the type of UST system equipment present at a facility:

1. UST system installed before 11/1/2007 with suction piping: requires transmission of all tank leak detection and overfill alarms. This requires UST systems to have automatic tank gauging capabilities.
2. UST system installed before 11/1/2007 with pressurized piping: requires transmission of all leak detection for tanks and piping, and tank overfill alarms. This requires UST systems to have automatic tank gauging capabilities as well as electronic line leak detectors installed.
3. UST system installed after 11/1/2007: requires transmission of all sensor alarms, including tank, sump, and spill bucket sensors, as well as overfill alarm.

An unattended facility must also have a placard that is posted in the dispensing area and it must contain contact information for the trained Emergency Response Operator on call for responding to emergencies and alarms at the facility.

During a compliance inspection, an NCDEQ inspector will verify that such a placard is posted in the dispensing area and that an automated notification system is in place as documented by printing a set-up report for the system.

NOTE: UST owners and operators need to be aware that the Emergency Response Operator training requirements above may differ from, but do **NOT** supersede, the requirements of the North Carolina Building and Fire Codes or the local fire Marshal.