

Conservation Law Foundation of New England, Inc.

detection by taste or smell difficult. Leaded gasoline contains lead, known to cause disorders of the central nervous system, and also EDB, another proven human carcinogen.

Nor is the problem solely one of groundwater contamination and threats to public health. There have been numerous incidents over the past few years in which fumes from leaking gasoline tanks have forced the evacuation of homes and buildings due to the risk of explosions.

The enclosed manual is aimed at helping local communities address this problem. The manual explains why tanks leak, how the leaks affect water supplies, public health and safety, and how future leaks can either be prevented or at least detected before they have caused serious environmental damage and health and safety risks.

The manual also proposes a two part strategy of local regulation and includes two model bylaws, one to regulate underground tanks throughout a community and the other to provide special protection for the most critical water supply areas.

CLF urges you to bring the manual and this letter to the attention of your board of health, fire department, water department and conservation commission. We shall be glad to supply one additional copy without charge to any local community requesting it. For further copies, there will be a reduced charge of \$5 plus postage.

If your community currently regulates underground petroleum storage, we urge you to review your regulations in the light of this manual. If you do not have a regulatory program, we urge you to have one adopted as soon as possible.

Please let us know if you have any questions or if we can be helpful in addressing this problem.

Sincerely,

Richard S. Emmet

Richard S. Emmet
Senior Counsel

Enclosure



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Conservation Law Foundation of New England, Inc.

RECEIVED BY
NEW BEDFORD CITY CLERK
FEB 25 11 53 AM '85
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
February 19, 1985

Dear Selectmen and City Councilors:

Somewhere in your community an underground gasoline or fuel oil tank is probably leaking.

This is not scare talk or speculation. In 1982, a Conservation Law Foundation survey of 22 communities in all parts of Massachusetts found that 60% of the known underground commercial petroleum tanks had been buried for 20 years or more -- most of them unprotected steel tanks. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation estimates that fully 50% of the bare steel tanks in the ground more than 15 years will be leaking.

In Fiscal 1983, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Quality Engineering cleaned up 87 leaks from underground petroleum tanks (51 containing gasoline and 36 containing fuel oil), of which 23 leaks resulted in groundwater contamination. When groundwater contamination does occur, cleanup is often extremely expensive and success cannot be assured. The most costly Massachusetts cleanup to date resulted from the 1977 leak of 3,000 gallons of gasoline in Provincetown, which forced that community to reduce pumping drastically at its major well field, to pay out \$1.4 million in developing alternative water supplies and in engineering fees, and to face today, eight years later, an additional cost of \$3 million to \$5 million to clean up the affected aquifer.

The problem seems to be increasing as the underground tank population continues to age. In Maine, for example, wells have been contaminated in at least 20 communities in the past two years alone. In Maryland, reports of underground gasoline tank leaks have tripled during the period 1981-1984. There are similar reports from other states.

Gasoline is one of the most toxic products in everyday use. Unleaded gasoline contains benzene, a proven human carcinogen, which is partially soluble in water and which may be present in drinking water at levels that are hazardous to health but that make

S-134

Comm. from Richard S. Emmet, Senior Counsel,
CONservation Law Foundation of New England,
Inc., Re: problems posed by underground
commercial petroleum tanks leaking their con-
tents, some of which result in groundwater
contamination.

In City Council,

February 25, 1985

2/25/85

Placed on file