

PETROL FILLING STATIONS

SITE DECOMMISSIONING

Guidance Notes

1. Partial or Full Site Closure

- 1.1. Tanks and pipework that have been used to store and dispense petrol remain a hazard until such time that appropriate steps have been taken to remove the danger.
- 1.2. When it is necessary to close down some or all of the storage tanks on a petrol filling station on a temporary or permanent basis, the Certificate holder, or where a site is abandoned, the occupier/owner of the land is responsible for ensuring that the installation is made safe.
- 1.3. Under the terms of The Petroleum (Consolidation) Regulations 2014, the Local Authority, as the Petroleum Enforcement Authority, should be notified that closure is about to take place and whether the site will be closed on a permanent or temporary basis.
- 1.4. In addition to what you may then be directed to do to make the site safe by an inspector appointed by the Petroleum Enforcement Authority, the **Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982** also permits the Local Authority to require that the site owner to make safe **any** disused petrol tanks. Failure to address these issues can result in enforcement action being taken and/or, in the necessary work being undertaken by the Local Authority and the cost being recovered from the site owner.
- 1.5. All work associated with making an installation safe should be carried out by contractors working to a Safety Method Statement and, in cases involving such operations as removal of tank lids and entry into a tank, a Permit to Work. This is a specialist job and should only be undertaken by contractors who are able to demonstrate that they are competent to do so.
- 1.6. Detailed guidance is contained in the “Blue Book¹”, which has been adopted by the Petroleum Enforcement Authority as their requirements for the design, construction and maintenance of petrol filling stations. The following guidance however provides a brief summary of these requirements.
- 1.7. It should be noted that the removal of all waste products from the site must be done in accordance with current legal requirements. Waste products in this context include any petrol, diesel other fuel oils and any water present in the tanks or introduced into the tank and pipeline system during the decommissioning process. Site operators should consult with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and/or Scottish Water in relation to their disposal of any such waste products.

2. Permanent Decommissioning

- 2.1. Following closure, a site may remain dormant for a considerable time prior to sale or redevelopment. Decommissioning should take place as soon as possible after the site has ceased trading. The following measures should be carried out:
 - 2.1.1. The tanks made safe, together with the corresponding pipework
 - 2.1.2. The dispensers removed and the electrical installation disconnected
 - 2.1.3. The separator/interceptor cleaned

¹ Guidance for the Design, Construction and Maintenance of Petrol Filling Stations” published jointly by the Energy Institute and the Association of Petroleum and Explosives Administration; ISBN 0 85293 419ZX +44(0) 1206 796 351

3. Tanks

- 3.1. Pipework containing residual petrol should be drained back to the tank and flushed through with water prior to the removal of the product remaining in the tank. Tanks may be made safe by one of the following methods once the residual product has been removed:
- 3.1.1. filling with hydrophobic foam
 - 3.1.2. filling with sand or cement slurry
 - 3.1.3. filling with foamed concrete
 - 3.1.4. converting to the storage of an alternative high flash product²

4. Pipework

- 4.1. The supply pipework should be disconnected from the tanks and the dispensers and all apertures securely capped off.
- 4.2. Offset fills and vent pipes should also be disconnected and securely capped off.

5. Dispensers

- 5.1. Dispensers should be drained of petrol, purged with nitrogen and the suction line entry point plugged off before removal from the site.

6. Removal of Tanks

- 6.1. Where the removal of tanks is to be carried out they must be made safe before excavations commence. The various methods to accomplish this, which are set out in detail within the “Blue Book”² include:
 - 6.1.1. Filling with hydrophobic foam
 - 6.1.2. Filling with nitrogen foam
 - 6.1.3. Degassing by removal of any residual product thorough purging of any flammable vapour.
- 6.2. Before removal from the site, all openings to excavated tanks should be sealed, including apertures caused by corrosion. The label “Petrol Highly Flammable” should be painted conspicuously on the each side, or both ends, of the tanks.
- 6.3. The contractors responsible for removal of the tanks from the site must ensure that whoever receives them must be made aware of the previous use of the tanks and take the necessary health and safety precautions regarding toxicity and fire and explosion hazards.
- 6.4. Whether the action is taken on the site is of a temporary or permanent nature the Petroleum Enforcement Authority will require to see documentary evidence that the work has been undertaken to recognised standards by competent contractors.

7. Temporary Decommissioning

- 7.1. On occasions it may be necessary to “mothball” a site prior to redevelopment or sale to another operator. This will only be permitted for a limited time, normally not exceeding 12 months or as agreed with the Petroleum Enforcement Authority.

² This option is only applicable to cases where the tanks are proven to be free of leaks and where on the basis of a risk assessment it has been expressly agreed with the Petroleum Licensing Authority.

- 7.2. The Petroleum Enforcement Authority may only permit such temporary decommissioning where the site remains under temporary closure and they are satisfied that the site will continue to be adequately supervised.
- 7.3. In such a case the pipework should be drained back to the tanks and the lines disconnected and securely capped off. The vent, however, is to be left connected.
- 7.4. The residual product should be removed from the tanks, which should then be filled with water. The tanks should then be checked at regular intervals not exceeding three months and any drop in water level investigated.
- 7.5. Once again, skilled contractors should be engaged to carry out these operations which, of necessity, involve work on the tank top and the removal of volatile product.

8. Contaminated Land Issues

- 8.1. It is recommended that you seek advice from the Highland Council Contaminated Land Team regarding any redevelopment of formerly petrol filling stations and fuel storage facilities.
- 8.2. If the site were to be subject of a planning application to change the use of the land to a more sensitive use then a contaminated land site investigation would be required to demonstrate that the land is 'suitable for use' as per Planning Advice Note (PAN) 33 (2000). As the site investigation can be carried out before or after a Planning Application is submitted, it may be beneficial for you to do this now.
- 8.3. Highland Council Contaminated Land Team can be contacted on 01463 644570 or log on to the Contaminated Land section of the Highland Council website for further information.

In all cases of either temporary or permanent decommissioning, it is essential that the Petroleum Enforcement Authority is consulted and kept informed as the work progresses.

Further information and guidance can be obtained from: -

Highland Council,
Trading Standards Unit,
38 Harbour Road,
Inverness,
IV1 1UF.

Tel. 01463 644570 (38 Harbour Road) or 01349 886603 (Customer Call Centre)
E-mail trading.standards@highland.gov.uk