

Stopping the Leak



Companies offer solutions for station owners to minimize disastrous environmental consequences.

It's common knowledge by now that the Gulf oil spill has spewed millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

And it's an alarming reminder for businesses everywhere that produce, supply, and sell petroleum products.

The reality is that, according to Canada's Auditor General, petroleum leaks from storage tank systems are responsible for about 66 per cent of groundwater and soil contamination in the country.

And since the late 1990s, changes to

Canada's Environmental Protection Act have taken shape to reduce the risk of storage tank leaks.

These amendments put onus on service station operators to follow specific operations and maintenance regulations, and mandatory leak-detection and monitoring. And the threat to your business is real. Fines can be onerous and any amount of time the system is down for repair is lost money.

Understanding the Problem

The tougher regulatory environment is all part of a larger process to minimize the risk of contamination from daily wear and tear of storage products.

"The one thing to remember first of all is that the underground environment at a gas station is subject to ground movement," says Graeme Roberts, vice-president of sales and marketing for California-based Blueline Technologies.



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“This varies in scale from minute pulses of energy in the pipe and delivery hose every time a dispenser nozzle is squeezed and released, and every time the pump turns on or off, all the way to the greater forces of quickly rising water tables after significant rain, which will try to push every tank sump and pipe void upwards.”

“The passage of vehicles also creates vibration and pressures,” Roberts says. “All these factors as well as the factors of the environment such as microbial attack, water corrosion, UV, etc., cause almost all equipment to degrade over time.”

Owners and operators need to consistently validate the integrity of the vessels and optimize the way in which they are monitored.

Key areas include:

- Release detection and reporting
- Spills
- Corrosion protection
- Air quality
- The presence of hazardous substances

Finding Solutions

What are some of the latest solutions? Assessing and diagnosing problems traditionally has been very labour intensive involving numerous organizational layers from maintenance personnel to outside contractors to react to various tank gauge alarms. Now companies like 7-Eleven and Wal-Mart have turned to automated solutions to proactively address alarm indications and compliance issues and, in the process, save a lot of money. Both companies use the FuelQuest Management System, a complete platform to manage fuel operations including monitoring of underground storage tanks.

Additionally, 7-Eleven uses the Alarm Management Services (AMS). This service employs a team of certified technicians who continuously monitor sites for safety and proper functioning. All alarm notifications are automatically routed to relevant partners based on their profile and include a problem diagnosis and

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suggested solution. With AMS the number of unnecessary dispatches can be reduced up to 30 per cent.

Common problems found by operators are degraded entry boots and leaking entry seals. Blueline Technologies have come up with innovative solutions that minimize the cost of repair.

“Our split boot entry system enables installers to remove and fix leaking entry fittings of any size and on any sump sur-

face or pipe outside diameter and replace quickly without having to break concrete or disconnect pipe, all from inside the sump,” Robert says. “This means a station can still pump gas during the 40 minute operation.

“Leaking entry seals do not need to have the station ripped up to be

repaired. The solution has been well tried and tested since 1994 and we have fixed thousands and thousands of worn out entry seals in this way at minimal expense or inconvenience to the station owner in the last few years,” he says.

Have cracks in the sump itself? Blueline’s repair kits, like their “liquid fibreglass” Bluebond 801, covers small cracks up to four inches.

And the company is only continuing to improve its services. The company will soon launch a sump refurbishment program, spraying old sumps with its products to cover them in a new quarter-inch “hard, fuel-resistant coating.”

“This can add many years to an older FRP sump and again avoids costly construction work and can be performed without having to break concrete,” says Roberts.



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