



News Release

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ADEQ Program to Help Schools with Underground Storage Tanks Wins Award for Environmental Achievement from EPA

PHOENIX (April 17, 2008) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Steve Owens announced today that ADEQ's initiative to clean up contamination from leaking Underground Storage Tanks (USTs) on school property and prevent future leaks from USTs has won a 2008 Environmental Achievement Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 9.

ADEQ's program was selected from more than 130 nominated programs of groups and individuals, including teachers, businesses, Indian tribes and environmental activists.

The award, for outstanding contributions to environmental protection, recognizes programs that address environmental needs, emphasize collaboration, and can be widely replicated.

"We launched our school UST program last year as a unique partnership with schools and school districts throughout the state to clean up contamination on school properties caused by leaking underground storage tanks, as well as to help schools prevent future leaks from tanks on their property," Director Owens said. "It is helping to protect the environment, and is saving schools across Arizona a lot of money."

The program is a joint effort by ADEQ's Children's Environmental Health program and the department's Tank Programs Division. ADEQ is using money from the State Assurance Fund (SAF), which is the state's UST remediation fund, to clean up contaminated soil and groundwater at school facilities. ADEQ also provides technical assistance to schools and school districts to ensure that USTs owned and operated by the schools and districts are properly maintained in accordance with the law to prevent future leakage.

ADEQ met on-site with officials and maintenance personnel at the 46 schools with active USTs and the 17 schools across the state with leaking USTs. Since inception of the program, compliance rates at the schools with active USTs have improved noticeably and no new leaks have been discovered.

"On behalf of our partners, we are pleased that our program is being recognized by EPA," Owens said. "We hope that it will indeed be adopted by environmental agencies across the country."