Petroleum Underground Storage Tanks/Key Historical Event: NEIWPCC Article Discusses/Links Television Show 60 Minutes Segment that Drew Congress's Attention



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The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission ("NEIWPCC") published an article titled:

Petroleum Releases in Rhode Island: Inside the Underground Storage Tanks Financial Responsibility Fund – A History of USTs in Rhode Island ("Article").

One of the focuses of the Article is a 1983 segment on the CBS television show 60 Minutes which discussed a petroleum underground storage tank ("UST") release that contaminated the water supply of the Rhode Island Village, Canob Park.

The 1983 60 Minutes segment brought attention to a concern that a significant percentage of the petroleum USTs in the nation could be releasing petroleum into the subsurface. Equally important, the Article describes how the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA"):

… credits the episode for bringing national attention to the impact of petroleum leaks from underground storage tanks (USTs) on drinking water supplies.

This is supported by the fact that the United States Congress in the following year (1984) added Subtitle I to the Solid Waste Disposal Act, which required EPA to promulgate regulations applicable to all owners and operators of USTs containing regulated substances. EPA was required to issue design, construction, insulation, and compatibility standards for new USTs, as well as requirements applicable to all UST owners and operators containing leak detection, recordkeeping, reporting, closure, corrective action, and financial responsibility. Almost every state (including Arkansas) has since been delegated the ability to operate their own petroleum UST regulatory programs.

The NEIWPCC Article is a useful reminder of an event that occurred around 43 years ago that resulted in the development of robust federal and state regulatory programs that continue to serve an important purpose today.

A copy of the Article which includes a link to the 60 Minutes segment narrated by CBS correspondent Harry Reasoner can be found here.