

PETROL FILLING STATIONS SITE DECOMMISSIONING

These notes are intended to give guidance on decommissioning a petrol station. Please use the contact details at the foot of the page for further advice.

Partial or Full Site Closure

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. 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 licensee, or where a licensee has lapsed, the occupier of the premises is responsible for ensuring that the installation is made safe.

Under the terms of the Petroleum Licence the Local Authority should be notified that closure is about to take place and whether the site will be closed on a permanent or temporary basis.

In addition to what you may then be directed to do to make the site safe by an inspector appointed by the Petroleum Licensing 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.

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.

Detailed guidance is contained in the "Blue Book1", which has been adopted by the Petroleum Licensing 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.

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.

Permanent Decommissioning

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:

- The tanks made safe, together with the corresponding pipework
- The dispensers removed and the electrical installation disconnected
- The separator/interceptor cleaned

Tanks

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:

- filling with hydrophobic foam
- filling with cement slurry having first been made inert by degassing
- filling with foamed concrete
- converting to the storage of an alternative high flash product²

Pipework

The supply pipework should be disconnected from the tanks and the dispensers and all apertures securely capped off.

Offset fills and vent pipes should also be disconnected and securely capped off.

Dispensers

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

Removal of Tanks

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”¹ include:

- Filling with hydrophobic foam
- Filling with nitrogen foam
- Degassing by removal of any residual product thorough purging of any flammable vapour.

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.

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.

Whether the action is taken on the site is of a temporary or permanent nature the Licensing Authority will require to see documentary evidence that the work has been undertaken to recognised standards by competent contractors.

Temporary Decommissioning

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 Licensing Authority.

The Licensing Authority may only permit such temporary decommissioning where the site remains under licence and they are satisfied that the site will continue to be adequately supervised.

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

Contaminated Land Issues

It is recommended that you seek advice from the Dumfries and Galloway Council Contaminated Land Team regarding any redevelopment of formerly licensed petrol filling stations and fuel storage facilities.

If the site were to be subject of a planning application the site owners would be required to demonstrate that the land is 'suitable for use' as per Planning Advice Note (PAN) 33 (2000). The requirements will vary according to the future use of the site and the condition of the site.

If there is a change of use to a more sensitive category (e.g. residential), a site investigation will be required. If the planning application does not involve excavations or a change of use to a more sensitive category (e.g. using only existing buildings for a commercial use) a site investigation may not be required. However if there is evidence of residual contamination affecting the ground or a watercourse, remediation may be required under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act, regardless of the future use of the site.

Further information and guidance can be obtained from: -

Environmental Standards
EnvironmentalHealth@dumgal.gov.uk

Contaminated Land
ContaminatedLand@dumgal.gov.uk

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

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.