Palm Beach County’s Petroleum Storage Tank Compliance Program

The Problem
- Various hazardous substances and petroleum based materials are stored and used in large quantities throughout Palm Beach County.
- If improperly handled, these materials can threaten surface and groundwater supplies that serve as drinking water sources.

The Solution
- In 1984, Chapters 62-761 and 62-762 Florida Administrative Code were passed to regulate petroleum storage tanks to prevent avoidable discharges.
- In 1988, ERM contracted with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to administer the Storage Tank Compliance Program for Palm Beach County (PBC).
- In 2003, PBC adopted the Petroleum Storage Systems Ordinance which allowed ERM to pursue enforcement against non compliant facilities and owners.

Benefits
- Provides the first line of defense and the highest level of protection for PBC’s land and water resources and drinking water supplies.
- Provides rapid response by experienced staff to assess daily compliance concerns and investigate reported or suspected discharges.

Program Overview
- 1,320 registered facilities in PBC store and dispense petroleum products in 2,826 tanks ranging in size from 110 to more than 21 million gallons.
- Staff work diligently to ensure public and environmental safety by:
  - Conducting annual compliance inspections.
  - Investigating reported/suspected discharges.
  - Overseeing tank installations and removals.
  - Reviewing plans for tank installs/removals.
  - Verifying that equipment meets the code.
  - Issuing annual marina spill plan certifications.
  - Verifying that gas stations have backup power ability.
  - Maintaining an online database of over 2 years of storage tank records.
  - Responding to more than 4,000 requests annually for technical assistance, general information, complaints, and plan review.

Violations Found in PBC During 2011
- Registration and insurance 19%
- Failure to check for leaks 19%
- Failure to test equipment 22%
- Failure of equipment to operate properly 40%

During 2011, the majority of violations found during inspections were resolved quickly due to PBC staff oversight.

Hot Topic
- What about those double walled systems? Isn’t secondary containment the answer to preventing leaks?
  - Nothing is leak proof—even double walled systems.
- Much of the storage tank system components such as product piping, spill buckets, sumps, and dispenser liners require frequent repair or replacement.
- Many storage tank system component leaks will go undetected without required monthly monitoring and equipment testing.
- Over 1,500 petroleum discharges have been reported in PBC since 1992 when storage tank secondary containment was first required.
- Recently, alternative fuel blends have shown corrosive properties that may shorten the life of existing storage tank system components.