Connecticut Release-Based Cleanup: Release Pathways

What to do, who cleans it up, and how it gets closed under the Release-Based Cleanup Regulations (RCSA 22a-134tt) and the Release Reporting Regulations (RCSA 22a-450)

Found a spill or contamination? Do this first:

1. **Stop work** in that area.
2. **Keep people away.** Don't try to clean it up unless you're trained. Fire, injury or strong fumes: **call 911**.
3. **Tell your supervisor** and the site's LEP right away. Not your property? The law gives you **1 business day** to tell the owner (**6 hours** if a drinking water well is affected).
4. **Spill happening now?** DEEP's 24-hour line: **860-424-3338**
5. **Find your release type** below, then follow its numbered row.

Step 1: Which type of release do you have?

1 · Regulated underground storage tank (UST)

What it is: a leak from a regulated underground tank, usually a commercial fuel or oil tank at a gas station, garage or business. Home heating oil tanks are not regulated USTs.

Example: fuel found in the soil while pulling a gas station tank.

Time frame: report to DEEP within **1 hour** (860-424-3338). Handled under the UST rules, not the RBCRs. Site characterization form due in **30 days**.

2 · Small spill, happening now (not reportable)

What it is: under 5 gallons of oil or fuel, or under 1.5 gallons or 10 lbs of another chemical, that doesn't reach water, a storm drain or a wetland and causes no danger.

Example: a quart of hydraulic fluid from a broken hose on a paved lot.

Time frame: fully cleaned up within **2 hours** by trained personnel. Not done in 2 hours? It must be reported (row 3).

3 · Reportable spill, happening now

What it is: 5+ gallons of oil or fuel, 1.5+ gallons or 10+ lbs of another chemical, **any amount** into water, a storm drain or a wetland, or any spill causing fire, fumes or danger.

Example: an excavator's fuel tank ruptures and diesel runs into a catch basin.

Time frame: report to DEEP within **1 hour** (860-424-3338). Cleanup must start right away, no later than **2 hours** after it's found.

4 · Significant Existing Release (old and dangerous)

What it is: old contamination that is a danger to people or the environment right now. Row 4 of the chart lists what counts.

Example: vapors from old solvents in groundwater next to an occupied building, or contamination reaching a drinking water well.

Time frame: report within **72 hours**; within **24 hours** if free product or contamination is reaching a drinking water well. Start immediate action right away.

5 · Other existing release (old, not an emergency)

What it is: old contamination in soil or groundwater, confirmed by lab results, that isn't an immediate danger.

Example: stained, oily-smelling soil found while digging a foundation, then sampled and found over state limits.

Time frame: over 2x the cleanup standard, or free product ⅛ inch or thicker: close or report within **120 days**. Under 2x: within **365 days**. Not closed in **1 year**: must be tiered.

6 · Release at a site in another program

What it is: contamination at a property already in another cleanup program, such as the Transfer Act, a brownfield or voluntary program, or a federal Superfund (NPL) site.

Example: a former factory still finishing its Transfer Act cleanup.

Time frame: follow that program's schedule. Ask the site's LEP which deadlines apply.

How to read the chart

- **Diamond = a question.** Answer yes or no, then follow the arrow with that answer.
- **White box = a step** to take, or who does the work.
- **Green box = finished.** The release is closed.
- **Red box = tiered.** Still open, with yearly DEEP fees until it's closed.
- **Dashed box = a note** with extra rules for that row.

Words to know

LEP: Licensed Environmental Professional. A state-licensed expert who signs off that a cleanup is complete.

Permitted spill contractor: a company with a DEEP permit to respond to and clean up spills.

HIC PEP: a PEP at a home heating oil tank removal company registered with the Dept. of Consumer Protection.

Persistent impact to groundwater: contamination still in groundwater after 24 hours. For oil: a sheen that's still there after 3 vacuum attempts in 24 hours.

Cleanup standard: the state limit for how much of a chemical can stay in soil or groundwater.

PEP: Permitted Environmental Professional. Can sign off only on certain spills and home heating oil releases.

Registered existing release response contractor: a company registered with DEEP to remove old contaminated soil.

Internal PEP: a PEP at a company with its own fire department or spill team (like a utility), signing off only on that company's own spills.

Free product (NAPL): oil or chemical floating or sitting in the ground as a liquid, not mixed into the water.

REACT: DEEP's online system for reporting and tracking releases.

Step 2: Find your numbered row and follow the arrows from left to right

1 · Regulated underground storage tank → Report within 1 hour → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor → Not subject to the RBCRs; not treated as a discovered release → **Clean up to the Remediation Standard Regulations**

A PEP must oversee the whole cleanup. An LEP is required if free product or groundwater impact is still there after 24 hours and 3 removal attempts (RCSA 22a-449(d)-106).

2 · Small spill, not reportable → Cleaned up to standard within 2 hours, or otherwise exempt from reporting → Cleaned up by properly trained personnel† → No report, certification or verification required. DEEP encourages keeping records.

†Properly trained personnel: OSHA training under 29 CFR 1910.120 and 1910.1200, plus competence with spill response equipment, procedures, containment and removal (RCSA 22a-450-1)

3 · Reportable spill, happening now → Report → Immediate action → Persistent impact to groundwater?

- Yes → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor, **verified by an LEP**
- No → Caused by a general permittee or its equipment?
  - Yes → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor, **verified by an LEP**
  - No → Residential UST #2 heating oil release?
    - No → Cleaned up and certified by a permitted spill contractor
    - Yes → Soil under a building impacted?
      - Yes → Permitted spill contractor cleanup; may be certified by a HIC general permit PEP
      - No → Migration off-site?
        - Yes → Permitted spill contractor cleanup; may be certified by a HIC general permit PEP
        - No → May be cleaned up and certified by a HIC general permit PEP

All routes → Reach cleanup standard?

- Yes → Closure documentation
- No → Immediate action end point → **Tiered**

Row 3 deadlines

- Report within **1 hour**. Start cleanup within **2 hours**.
- Spill in soil: start digging it out within **2 hours**. PCBs: removed or disposed of within **48 hours**.
- Sheen on a stream, pond or wetland: booms and recovery within **2 hours**.
- Drinking water well affected: give the users other water; sample nearby wells within **36 hours**.
- Not cleaned up within **1 year**: tiered.

When a PEP can close a spill

A PEP can sign off on a spill only if **all** of these are true:

- The location, size and chemical were known when cleanup started.
- It didn't reach groundwater, or it's only oil, more than 500 ft from a drinking water well, with no persistent groundwater impact.
- The contaminated soil was dug out and properly disposed of.
- Home heating oil tank jobs: the tank company's PEP can sign off on **soil only**. Any groundwater impact needs an LEP.

Otherwise, **an LEP must verify it.**

4 · Significant Existing Release → Report → Immediate action → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor‡ → Reach cleanup standard?

- Yes → **Closure documentation: LEP verification**
- No → Immediate action end point → **Tiered**

‡Non-spill cleanup contractors may install and operate water treatment systems.

What makes a release "significant" (any one): contamination reaching a drinking water well · groundwater over limits within 500 ft of a drinking water well · very high levels in the top 2 ft of soil (15–30x the limit, depending on use) · solvent or fuel vapors in groundwater within 15 ft of a building at 10x the limit · free product or 10x-limit groundwater within 500 ft of a stream, pond or wetland

5 · Other existing release → May be cleaned up by a registered existing release response contractor → Above 2x the applicable numeric cleanup standard?

- Yes → Cleaned up within 120 days?
  - Yes → **Closure documentation: LEP verification§**
  - No → Report to DEEP → Characterized and cleaned up within one year?
    - Yes → **Closure documentation: LEP verification§**
    - No → **Tiered**
- No → Characterized and cleaned up within one year?
  - Yes → **Closure documentation: LEP verification§**
  - No → **Tiered**

§A PEP may certify closure of an old release only if it is home heating oil at a home with 4 or fewer units, caused by the owner or occupant, and any soil left in place isn't affecting groundwater or indoor air. Everything else needs LEP verification.

6 · Release in another program
CGS 22a-6u, 22a-133m, 22a-134a, 22a-133x, 22a-133y, 22a-449(c), brownfield or National Priorities List

- PCBs above 10 ppm, or from a TSCA-regulated source?
  - Yes → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor; **LEP verification**
  - No → Release to surface water or groundwater?
    - Yes → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor; **LEP verification**
    - No → Reportable under RCSA 22a-450?
      - Yes → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor; **LEP verification**
      - No → Covered by a marine terminal permit, CERCLA §103 or EPCRA §304?
        - Yes → Cleaned up by a permitted spill contractor; **LEP verification**
        - No → May be cleaned up by a registered existing release response contractor; **LEP verification**

Tiered releases: an LEP assigns Tier 1A (highest risk, DEEP supervises), 1B, 2 or 3 (shrinking groundwater plume). Base fees are $3,000, $1,500, $1,000 and $500, rising by 10% of the base each year. **Deadlines from the tier date:** Tier 1A must be closed or moved down within 1 year, 1B within 2 years, Tier 2 within 4 years, Tier 3 closed within 5 years (extensions possible). Owner-occupied single-family homes pay no fee; towns, nonprofits and brownfield-funded projects pay half.

General information only, not legal advice. Based on RCSA 22a-134tt-1 through tt-13 (revised April 8, 2026), RCSA 22a-450, RCSA 22a-449(d)-106 and DEEP's PEP general permit (issued February 13, 2026). Confirm the path for your release with an LEP.