

# DRINKING WATER THREATS: Fuel Handling



FACT  
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Drinking Water Source Protection is a provincial program to protect our municipal drinking water sources from threats of contamination.



## What is the Threat?

Fuel spills can cause devastation to the natural environment, damage to property, and irreversible damage to plants, animals, water supplies and human health. Petroleum products as contaminants, can make their way into surface water or groundwater from spills associated with the storage and handling of fuel. Many Federal, Provincial and Municipal policies already regulate fuel storage and handling but gaps may still exist.

The Sault Ste. Marie Source Protection Plan has a policy to manage the risk, prevent spills and ensure appropriate spill response.



## Where is it a Threat?

This policy applies to areas where existing fuel storage and handling is considered a threat because it is located in the Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA) "A". The policy applies to activities where large volumes of fuel are: stored, dispensed, refined or manufactured.

Large volumes of fuel involving more than 2,500 litres of fuel are usually associated with gas stations, bulk plants, refineries or manufacturers. Storage and handling of volumes of more than 2,500 litres may also occur on farms, work yards or other properties where one or more tanks are used for refueling vehicles or equipment. Resident home heating oil tanks are typically less than 2,500 litres and will not be affected by the policy.



## What can you do?

Fuels move very quickly through the soil. When a spill occurs the fuel can quickly reach the groundwater and contaminate it. As fuel breaks down, its components have the capacity to travel in the groundwater for long distances. When a spill occurs contact the 24 hour Spills Action Centre immediately at 1-800-268-6060.



## Managing the risk

The Sault Ste. Marie Region Source Protection Plan, Policy Numbers: SSM-Fuel-F-1.1 and SSM-Fuel-E-1.2 are designed for the prevention of fuel storage and handling facilities both future and existing within vulnerable areas where it would be a significant threat.

Fuel storage and handling is designated for the purposes of Section 57 Prohibition of the *Clean Water Act, 2006* in all WHPA-As where the threat does not currently exist. The Wellhead Protection Area-A or WHPA-A is the area within 100 metres of a municipal well.

The types of fuels include, but are not limited to: diesel, oil when used as fuel, kerosene and gasoline. The rationale for this policy is to reduce or eliminate drinking water threats related to the handling and storage of fuel and prevention of fuel spills that could enter municipal sources of groundwater.

If your property is located in a WHPA-A and you store large amounts of gas or diesel your fuel storage may have the potential to contaminate a source of municipal drinking water if not properly managed.



## Am I in a vulnerable area?

You can find out if you live or own property in a vulnerable area by contacting your local Risk Management Official (RMO) or Risk Management Inspector (RMI). They will help you find solutions intended to keep our municipal drinking water safe. They are available to speak to you on the phone or in person to answer any questions you might have.

Together, you'll explore options and work co-operatively to develop solutions. Certain activities may be prohibited or restricted or subject to a Risk Management Plan. The plan documents what measures are already in place and what needs to be added so that activities on the land are no longer a risk to the municipal water supply. Normal residential storage and handling of fuel is not considered a threat under the local Source Protection Plan.



## How does this impact me?

If you live in a vulnerable area, you have a special responsibility to be aware of your actions and how they can impact our drinking water supplies ... a responsibility we hope you take personally. This responsibility also applies if you are leasing, renting or sub-letting the land. The decisions you make can affect the water coming out of the tap for you and your neighbours. Best management practices can improve water quality for future generations.



## Prevention is key

It sounds obvious...chemicals and other toxic substances could make our water undrinkable. It's far easier to prevent contamination than it is to clean it up. In fact, for some chemicals or substances, clean-up is practically impossible. In some cases, municipalities have been forced to decommission, or plug and seal wells because of contamination.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT



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**Sault Ste. Marie Region Source Protection Area**

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