

Abandoned petroleum tank testing ongoing in the area

By Emily Summars Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, July 16, 2015 7:15 am

Employees with the consulting firm Oklahoma Environmental Services have battled blazing heat this week to test petroleum storage tanks.

The consulting firm is conducting site assessments this month at former fueling facilities in the area. Environmental Services President Deanna Atkinson said sometimes abandoned petroleum sites, like gas stations, leave petroleum storage tanks on the property that will leak contaminants into the groundwater and soil. As a result, gasoline or diesel could leak into water sources or be held in subsurface soil.

“Ideally, sampling would be done when the tanks are removed,” Atkinson said. “Unfortunately, these tanks are orphans so no individuals are stepping up to remove the tanks.”

Oklahoma Corporation Commission Petroleum Storage Tank Division is in charge of tracking and monitoring storage tanks. OCC Petroleum Storage Tank Division Director Robyn Strickland said she would have preferred the money be used to remove the underground storage tanks, which are labeled as abandoned and unusable. However, the grant only covers sampling the facilities’ soil and groundwater, not removal.

In order to remove, or close the tanks, they must be sampled and meet certain sampling protocols.

Environmental Services bid for the project through Oklahoma’s Office of Management and Enterprise Services, and tanks have been tested in Fairview, Nash, Drummond, Ponca City and other areas of the state. Atkinson said tests of the soil and groundwater surround the petroleum tanks have not been returned from the lab.

“There are a couple of stations with visual petroleum impact,” Atkinson said, but until lab analyses are completed, no action will be taken. Atkinson did not say in what area the visual impact was located. Oklahoma has about 1,700 underground out-of-use storage tanks and received funds to test 23 of those tanks.

“By utilizing our own drilling rig, project managers and field staff, we will complete the sub-surface investigation at these 23 sites by the EPA’s (Environmental Protection Agency’s) Sept. 15 deadline,” Atkinson said.

Most of the petroleum storage tanks failed to meet upgrade requirements in the late-1980s and have sat in the ground since then. In some areas, like Drummond, the gas station was demolished, but the petroleum storage tanks remained.