Article 21A.

Oil Pollution and Hazardous Substances Control.

Part 1. General Provisions.

§ 143-215.75. Title.

This Article shall be known and may be cited as the "Oil Pollution and Hazardous Substances Control Act of 1978." (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1979, c. 535, s. 1.)

§ 143-215.76. Purpose.

It is the purpose of this Article to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of this State by protecting the land and the waters over which this State has jurisdiction from pollution by oil, oil products, oil by-products, and other hazardous substances. It is not the intention of this Article to exercise jurisdiction over any matter as to which the United States government has exclusive jurisdiction, nor in any wise contrary to any governing provision of federal law, and no provision of this Article shall be so construed. The General Assembly further declares that it is the intent of this Article to support and complement applicable provisions of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended, 33 U.S.C. section 1251 et seq., as amended, and the National Contingency Plan for removal of oil adopted pursuant thereto. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1979, c. 535, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.77. Definitions.

As used in this Article, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Barrel" shall mean 42 U.S. gallons at 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

(2) "Commission" means the North Carolina Environmental Management Commission.

(3) "Secretary" shall mean the North Carolina Secretary of Environmental Quality.

(4) "Discharge" shall mean, but shall not be limited to, any emission, spillage, leakage, pumping, pouring, emptying, or dumping of oil or other hazardous substances into waters of the State or into waters outside the territorial limits of the State which affect lands, waters or uses related thereto within the territorial limits of the State, or upon land in such proximity to waters that oil or other hazardous substances is reasonably likely to reach the waters, but shall not include amounts less than quantities which may be harmful to the public health or welfare as determined pursuant to G.S. 143-215.77A; provided, however, that this Article shall not be construed to prohibit the oiling of driveways, roads or streets for reduction of dust or routine maintenance; provided further, that the use of oil or other hazardous substances, oil-based products, or chemicals on the land or waters by any State, county, or municipal government agency in any program of mosquito or other pest control, or their use by any person in accepted agricultural, horticultural, or forestry practices, or in connection with aquatic weed control or structural pest and rodent control, in a manner approved by the State, county, or local agency charged with authority over such uses, shall not constitute a discharge; provided, further, that the use of a pesticide regulated by the North Carolina Pesticide Board in a manner consistent with the labelling required by the North Carolina Pesticide Law shall not constitute a "discharge" for purposes of this Article. The word "discharge" shall also include any

discharge upon land, whether or not in proximity to waters, which is intentional, knowing or willful.

(5) "Having control over oil or other hazardous substances" shall mean, but shall not be limited to, any person, using, transferring, storing, or transporting oil or other hazardous substances immediately prior to a discharge of such oil or other hazardous substances onto the land or into the waters of the State, and specifically shall include carriers and bailees of such oil or other hazardous substances. This definition shall not include any person supplying or delivering oil into a petroleum underground storage tank that is not owned or operated by the person, unless:

a. The person knows or has reason to know that a discharge is occurring from the petroleum underground storage tank at the time of supply or delivery;

b. The person's negligence is a proximate cause of the discharge; or

c. The person supplies or delivers oil at a facility that requires an operating permit under G.S. 143-215.94U and a currently valid operating permit certificate is not held or displayed at the time of the supply or delivery.

(5a) "Hazardous substance" shall mean any substance, other than oil, which when discharged in any quantity may present an imminent and substantial danger to the public health or welfare, as designated pursuant to G.S. 143-215.77A.

(6) Repealed by Session Laws 1979, c. 981, s. 5.

(7) "Department" shall mean the Department of Environmental Quality.

(8) "Oil" shall mean oil of any kind and in any form, including, but specifically not limited to, petroleum, crude oil, diesel oil, fuel oil, gasoline, lubrication oil, oil refuse, oil mixed with other waste, oil sludge, petroleum related products or by-products, and all other liquid hydrocarbons, regardless of specific gravity, whether singly or in combination with other substances.

(9) "Bailee" shall mean any person who accepts oil or other hazardous substances to hold in trust for another for a special purpose and for a limited period of time.

(10) "Carrier" shall mean any person who engages in the transportation of oil or other hazardous substances for compensation.

(11) "Oil terminal facility" shall mean any facility of any kind and related appurtenances located in, on or under the surface of any land, or water, including submerged lands, which is used or capable of being used for the purpose of transferring, transporting, storing, processing, or refining oil; but shall not include any facility having a storage capacity of less than 500 barrels, nor any retail gasoline dispensing operation serving the motoring public. A vessel shall be considered an oil terminal facility only in the event that it is utilized to transfer oil from another vessel to an oil terminal facility; or to transfer oil between one oil terminal facility and another oil terminal facility; or is used to store oil.

(12) "Operator" shall mean any person owning or operating an oil terminal facility or pipeline, whether by lease, contract, or any other form of agreement.

(13) "Person" shall mean any and all natural persons, firms, partnerships, associations, public or private institutions, municipalities or political

subdivisions, governmental agencies, or private or public corporations organized or existing under the laws of this State or any other state or country.

(14) "Pipeline" shall mean any conduit, pipe or system of pipes, and any appurtenances related thereto and used in conjunction therewith, used, or capable of being used, for transporting or transferring oil to, from, or between oil terminal facilities.

(15) "Restoration" or "restore" shall mean any activity or project undertaken in the public interest or to protect public interest or to protect public property or to promote the public health, safety or welfare for the purpose of restoring any lands or waters affected by an oil or other hazardous substances discharge as nearly as is possible or desirable to the condition which existed prior to the discharge.

(16) "Transfer" shall mean the transportation, on-loading or off-loading of oil or other hazardous substances between or among two or more oil terminal facilities; between or among oil terminal facilities and vessels; and between or among two or more vessels.

(17) "Vessel" shall include every description of watercraft or other contrivance used, or capable of being used, as a means of transportation on water, whether self-propelled or otherwise, and shall include, but shall not be limited to, barges and tugs; provided that the term "vessel" as used herein shall not apply to any pleasure, sport or commercial fishing vessel which has a fuel capacity of less than 500 gallons and is not used to transport petroleum, petroleum products, or general cargo.

(18) "Waters" shall mean any stream, river, creek, brook, run, canal, swamp, lake, sound, tidal estuary, bay, reservoir, waterway, wetlands, or any other body or accumulation of water, surface or underground, public or private, natural or artificial, which is contained within, flows through, or borders upon this State, or any portion thereof, including those portions of the Atlantic Ocean over which this State has jurisdiction. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1979, c. 535, ss. 3-10; c. 981, ss. 3-5; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1209, ss. 1, 2; 1987, c. 827, s. 155; 1989, c. 656, s. 1; c. 727, s. 218(111); 1995, c. 377, s. 12; 1997-443, s. 11A.119(a); 2015-241, ss. 14.30(u), (v).)

§ 143-215.77A. Designation of hazardous substances and determination of quantities which may be harmful.

(a) Those substances designated as hazardous as of June 1, 1980, by the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency under 33 U.S.C. 1321(b)(2)(A) are designated as hazardous substances for purposes of this Article.

(b) Such quantities of hazardous substances as may be harmful as determined as of June 1, 1980, by the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency under 33 U.S.C. 1321(b)(4) are quantities which may be harmful for purposes of this Article.

(c) Changes by Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency in the designation of hazardous substances and the determination of quantities which may be harmful shall be deemed to be made to the designation of hazardous substances and the determination of quantities for purposes of this Article, unless the Commission objects within 120 days of publication of the action in the Federal Register. The Commission may object to a change by the

Administrator on the basis that the change is not consistent with the standards for determining hazardous substances or harmful quantities. Upon objection by the Commission to a change, the Commission shall initiate rulemaking proceedings on the change. The change will not be made pending the hearing and a final determination by the Commission. After the hearing, the Commission may reject the change upon a finding that the change is not consistent with the standards for determining hazardous substances or harmful quantities. (1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1209, s. 3; 1987, c. 827, s. 190; 2025-25, s. 29(6).)

§ 143-215.78. Oil pollution control program.

The Department shall establish an oil pollution control program for the administration of this Article. The Department may employ and prescribe the duties of employees assigned to this activity. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, s. 11.)

§ 143-215.79. Inspections and investigations; entry upon property.

The Commission, through its authorized representatives, is empowered to conduct such inspections and investigations as shall be reasonably necessary to determine compliance with the provisions of this Article; to determine the person or persons responsible for violation of this Article; to determine the nature and location of any oil or other hazardous substances discharged to the land or waters of this State; and to enforce the provisions of this Article. The authorized representatives of the Commission are empowered upon presentation of their credentials to enter upon any private or public property, including boarding any vessel, for the purpose of inspection or investigation or in order to conduct any project or activity to contain, collect, disperse or remove oil or other hazardous substances discharges or to perform any restoration necessitated by an oil or other hazardous substances discharge. Neither the State nor its agencies, employees or agents shall be liable in trespass or damages arising out of the conduct of any inspection, investigation, or oil or other hazardous substances removal or restoration project or activity other than liability for damage to property or injury to persons arising out of the negligent or willful conduct of an employee or agent of the State during the course of an inspection, investigation, project or activity. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, s. 12; 1987, c. 827, s. 154.)

§ 143-215.80. Confidential information.

Any information relating to a secret process, device or method of manufacturing or production discovered or obtained in the course of an inspection, investigation, project or activity conducted pursuant to this Article shall not be revealed except as may be required by law or lawful order or process. (1973, c. 534, s. 1.)

§ 143-215.81. Authority supplemental.

The authority and powers granted under this Article shall be in addition to, and not in derogation of, any authority or powers vested in the Commission under any other provision of law, except to the extent that such other powers or authority may conflict directly with the powers and authority granted under this Article. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 191.)

§ 143-215.82. Local ordinances.

Nothing in the Article shall be construed to deny any county, municipality, sanitary district, metropolitan sewerage district or other authorized local governmental entity, by ordinance, regulation or law, from exercising police powers with reference to the prevention and control of oil

or other hazardous substances discharges to sewers or disposal systems. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1979, c. 535, s. 13.)

Part 2. Oil Discharge Controls.

§ 143-215.83. Discharges.

(a) Unlawful Discharges. – It shall be unlawful, except as otherwise provided in this Part, for any person to discharge, or cause to be discharged, oil or other hazardous substances into or upon any waters, tidal flats, beaches, or lands within this State, or into any sewer, surface water drain or other waters that drain into the waters of this State, regardless of the fault of the person having control over the oil or other hazardous substances, or regardless of whether the discharge was the result of intentional or negligent conduct, accident or other cause.

(b) Excepted Discharges. – This section shall not apply to discharges of oil or other hazardous substances in the following circumstances:

(1) When the discharge was authorized by an existing rule of the Commission.

(2) When any person subject to liability under this Article proves that a discharge was caused by any of the following:

a. An act of God.

b. An act of war or sabotage.

c. Negligence on the part of the United States government or the State of North Carolina or its political subdivisions.

d. An act or omission of a third party, whether any such act or omission was or was not negligent.

e. Any act or omission by or at the direction of a law-enforcement officer or fireman.

(c) Permits. – Any person who desires or proposes to discharge oil or other hazardous substances onto the land or into the waters of this State shall first make application for and secure the permit required by G.S. 143-215.1. Application shall be made pursuant to the rules adopted by the Commission. Any permit granted pursuant to this subsection may contain such terms and conditions as the Commission shall deem necessary and appropriate to conserve and protect the land or waters of this State and the public interest therein. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, s. 14; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 192.)

§ 143-215.84. Removal of prohibited discharges.

(a) Person Discharging. – Except as provided in subsection (a2) of this section, any person having control over oil or other hazardous substances discharged in violation of this Article shall immediately undertake to collect and remove the discharge and to restore the area affected by the discharge as nearly as may be to the condition existing prior to the discharge. If it is not feasible to collect and remove the discharge, the person responsible shall take all practicable actions to contain, treat and disperse the discharge; but no chemicals or other dispersants or treatment materials which will be detrimental to the environment or natural resources shall be used for such purposes unless they shall have been previously approved by the Commission. The owner of an underground storage tank who is the owner of the tank only because he is the owner of the land on which the underground storage tank is located, who did not know or have reason to know that the underground storage tank was located on his property, and who did not become the owner of the land as the result of a transfer or transfers to avoid liability for the underground storage tank shall not be deemed to be responsible for a release or discharge from the underground storage tank.

(a1) The Commission shall not require collection or removal of a discharge or restoration of an affected area under subsection (a) of this section if the person having control over oil or other hazardous substances discharged in violation of this Article complies with rules governing the collection and removal of a discharge and the restoration of an affected area adopted by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-214.1 or G.S. 143-215.94V. This subsection shall not be construed to affect the rights of any person under this Article or any other provision of law.

(a2) Discharges of Mineral Oil From Electrical Equipment. – As used in this subsection, "mineral oil" means a light nontoxic liquid petroleum distillate used as a coolant and insulator in electrical equipment owned by a public utility. Any person having control over mineral oil discharged from electrical equipment owned by a public utility, as defined in G.S. 62-100, including, but not limited to, transformers, regulators, bushings, and capacitors, shall restore the area affected by the discharge as nearly as may be to the condition existing prior to the discharge. A person shall notify the applicable regional office of the Department by telephone, hand delivery, email, or fax when the restoration has been properly completed for a discharge that (i) exceeds 25 gallons, (ii) is directly to surface waters or causes a sheen on surface waters of the State, or (iii) is at a distance of 100 feet or less from any surface water and contains 50 parts per million or more of polychlorinated biphenyls. Where soil removal is necessary as part of a cleanup, all visible traces of the mineral oil shall be removed. For discharges of mineral oil which contain 50 parts per million or more of polychlorinated biphenyls, cleanup shall be performed in compliance with applicable provisions of the Toxic Substances Control Act, 15 U.S.C. § 2601, et seq., as amended. If it is not feasible to collect and remove the discharge of mineral oil from electrical equipment within 24 hours of confirmation of the release, the person responsible shall take all practicable actions to contain, treat, and disperse the discharge, except that no chemical or other dispersants or treatment materials which will be detrimental to the environment or natural resources shall be used for such purposes unless they shall have been previously approved by the Commission.

(b) Removal by Department. – Notwithstanding the requirements of subsections (a) and (a2) of this section, the Department is authorized and empowered to utilize any staff, equipment and materials under its control or supplied by other cooperating State or local agencies and to contract with any agent or contractor that it deems appropriate to take such actions as are necessary to collect, investigate, perform surveillance over, remove, contain, treat or disperse oil or other hazardous substances discharged onto the land or into the waters of the State and to perform any necessary restoration. The Secretary shall keep a record of all expenses incurred in carrying out any project or activity authorized under this section, including actual expenses incurred for services performed by the State's personnel and for use of the State's equipment and material. The authority granted by this subsection shall be limited to projects and activities that are designed to protect the public interest or public property, and shall be compatible with the National Contingency Plan established pursuant to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended, 33 U.S.C. section 1251 et seq.

(c), (d) Repealed by Session Laws 1989, c. 656, s. 2.

(e) Notification of Completed Removal of Prohibited Discharges. – The definitions set out in G.S. 130A-310.31(b) apply to this subsection. Any person may submit a written request to the Department for a determination that a discharge of oil or a hazardous substance in violation of this Article has been remediated to unrestricted use standards. A request for a determination that a discharge has been remediated to unrestricted use standards shall be accompanied by the fee required by G.S. 130A-310.39(a)(2). If the Department determines that the discharge has been remediated to unrestricted use standards, the Department shall issue a written notification that no

further remediation of the discharge will be required. The notification shall state that no further remediation of the discharge will be required unless the Department later determines, based on new information or information not previously provided to the Department, that the discharge has not been remediated to unrestricted use standards or that the Department was provided with false or incomplete information. Under any of those circumstances, the Department may withdraw the notification and require responsible parties to remediate the discharge to unrestricted use standards.

(f) In order to reduce or eliminate the danger to public health or the environment posed by a discharge or release of oil or a hazardous substance, an owner, operator, or other responsible party may impose restrictions on the current or future use of the real property comprising any part of the site if the restrictions meet the requirements of this subsection. The restrictions must be agreed to by the owner of the real property, included in a remedial action plan for the site that has been approved by the Secretary, and implemented as a part of the remedial action program for the site. The Secretary may approve restrictions included in a remedial action plan in accordance with standards determined: (i) pursuant to rules for remediation of soil or groundwater contamination adopted by the Commission; (ii) with respect to the cleanup of a discharge or release from a petroleum underground storage tank, pursuant to rules adopted by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94V; or (iii) as provided in G.S. 130A-310.3(d). Restrictions may apply to activities on, over, or under the land, including, but not limited to, use of groundwater, building, filling, grading, excavating, and mining. Any approved restriction shall be enforced by any owner, operator, or other party responsible for the oil or hazardous substance discharge site. Any land-use restriction may also be enforced by the Department through the remedies provided in this Article, Part 2 of Article 1 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes, or by means of a civil action. The Department may enforce any land-use restriction without first having exhausted any available administrative remedies. A land-use restriction may also be enforced by any unit of local government having jurisdiction over any part of the site. A land-use restriction shall not be declared unenforceable due to lack of privity of estate or contract, due to lack of benefit to particular land, or due to lack of any property interest in particular land. Any person who owns or leases a property subject to a land-use restriction under this Part shall abide by the land-use restriction. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1975, c. 885; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1979, c. 535, s. 15; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 193; 1989, c. 656, s. 2; 1991, c. 538, s. 14; 1995, c. 377, s. 13; 1997-357, s. 7; 1997-394, s. 4; 1997-456, s. 50; 2001-384, s. 11; 2011-38, s. 2; 2025-25, s. 29(1).)

§ 143-215.85. Required notice.

(a) Except as provided in G.S. 143-215.94E(a1) and subsections (b) and (c) of this section, every person owning or having control over oil or other substances discharged in any circumstances other than pursuant to a rule adopted by the Commission, a regulation of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, or a permit required by G.S. 143-215.1 or the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, upon notice that such discharge has occurred, shall immediately notify the Department, or any of its agents or employees, of the nature, location and time of the discharge and of the measures which are being taken or are proposed to be taken to contain and remove the discharge. The agent or employee of the Department receiving the notification shall immediately notify the Secretary or such member or members of the permanent staff of the Department as the Secretary may designate. If the discharged substance of which the Department is notified is a pesticide regulated by the North Carolina Pesticide Board, the Department shall immediately inform the Chairman of the Pesticide Board. Removal operations under this Article of substances

identified as pesticides defined in G.S. 143-460 shall be coordinated in accordance with the Pesticide Emergency Plan adopted by the North Carolina Pesticide Board; provided that, in instances where entry of such hazardous substances into waters of the State is imminent, the Department may take such actions as are necessary to physically contain or divert such substance so as to prevent entry into the surface waters.

(b) As used in this subsection, "petroleum" has the same meaning as in G.S. 143-215.94A. A person who owns or has control over petroleum that is discharged into the environment shall immediately take measures to collect and remove the discharge, report the discharge to the Department within 24 hours of the discharge, and begin to restore the area affected by the discharge in accordance with the requirements of this Article if the volume of the petroleum that is discharged is 25 gallons or more or if the petroleum causes a sheen on nearby surface water or if the petroleum is discharged at a distance of 100 feet or less from any surface water body. If the volume of petroleum that is discharged is less than 25 gallons, the petroleum does not cause a sheen on nearby surface water, and the petroleum is discharged at a distance of more than 100 feet from all surface water bodies, the person who owns or has control over the petroleum shall immediately take measures to collect and remove the discharge. If a discharge of less than 25 gallons of petroleum cannot be cleaned up within 24 hours of the discharge or if the discharge causes a sheen on nearby surface water, the person who owns or has control over the petroleum shall immediately notify the Department.

(c) As used in this subsection, "mineral oil" means a light nontoxic liquid petroleum distillate used as a coolant and insulator in electrical equipment owned by a public utility. Any person who owns or has control over mineral oil discharged from electrical equipment owned by a public utility, as defined in G.S. 62-100, including, but not limited to, transformers, regulators, bushings, and capacitors, shall report the discharge to the applicable regional office of the Department within 24 hours of confirmation of a discharge when the discharge (i) exceeds 25 gallons, (ii) is directly to surface waters or causes a sheen on surface waters of the State, or (iii) is at a distance of 100 feet or less from any surface water and contains 50 parts per million or more of polychlorinated biphenyls. The notification shall include the time of discovery, address or location of the release, immediate actions taken, estimated amount of the release, and, if known, the concentration of polychlorinated biphenyls present in the discharge. This information may be submitted by telephone, hand delivery, email, or fax. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; c. 858, s. 1; 1979, c. 535, ss. 16, 17; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 194; 2000-54, s. 1; 2011-38, s. 1; 2025-25, s. 29(1).)

§ 143-215.85A. Recordation of oil or hazardous substance discharge sites.

(a) The owner of the real property on which a site is located that is subject to current or future use restrictions approved as provided in G.S. 143-215.84(f) shall submit to the Department a survey plat as required by this section within 180 days after the owner is notified to do so. The survey plat shall identify areas designated by the Department, shall be prepared and certified by a professional land surveyor, and shall be entitled "NOTICE OF OIL OR HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE DISCHARGE SITE". Where an oil or hazardous substance discharge site is located on more than one parcel or tract of land, a composite map or plat showing all parcels or tracts may be recorded. The Notice shall include a legal description of the site that would be sufficient as a description in an instrument of conveyance, shall meet the requirements of G.S. 47-30 for maps and plats, and shall identify:

(1) The location and dimensions of the disposal areas and areas of potential environmental concern with respect to permanently surveyed benchmarks.
(2) The type, location, and quantity of oil or hazardous substances known to the owner of the site to exist on the site.
(3) Any restrictions approved by the Department on the current or future use of the site.

(b) After the Department approves and certifies the Notice, the owner of the site shall file the certified copy of the Notice in the register of deeds office in the county or counties in which the land is located within 15 days of the date on which the owner receives approval of the Notice from the Department.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2012-18, s. 1.20, effective July 1, 2012.

(d) In the event that the owner of the site fails to submit and file the Notice required by this section within the time specified, the Secretary may prepare and file the Notice. The costs thereof may be recovered by the Secretary from any responsible party. In the event that an owner of a site who is not a responsible party submits and files the Notice required by this section, he may recover the reasonable costs thereof from any responsible party.

(e) When an oil or hazardous substance discharge site that is subject to current or future land-use restrictions under this section is sold, leased, conveyed, or transferred, the deed or other instrument of transfer shall contain in the description section, in no smaller type than that used in the body of the deed or instrument, a statement that the property has been used as an oil or hazardous substance discharge site and a reference by book and page to the recordation of the Notice.

(f) A Notice of Oil or Hazardous Substance Discharge Site filed pursuant to this section may, at the request of the owner of the land, be cancelled by the Secretary after the hazards have been eliminated. If requested in writing by the owner of the land and if the Secretary concurs with the request, the Secretary shall send to the register of deeds of each county where the Notice is recorded a statement that the hazards have been eliminated and request that the Notice be cancelled of record. The Secretary's statement shall contain the names of the owners of the land as shown in the Notice and reference the plat book and page where the Notice is recorded.

(g) If a site subject to the requirements of this section is remediated pursuant to the requirements of Part 8 of Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes, a Notice of Restricted Use may be prepared and filed, with the approval of the Department and in accordance with G.S. 130A-310.71(e) in lieu of a Notice of Residual Contamination or a Notice of Oil or Hazardous Substance Discharge Site. (1997-394, s. 5; 1997-443, s. 11A.119(b); 1997-456, s. 55.6(a), (b); 2012-18, s. 1.20; 2015-286, s. 4.7(d); 2021-158, s. 7(b).)

§ 143-215.86. Other State agencies and State-designated local agencies.

(a) Planning. – The State Emergency Response Commission shall be responsible for developing a program, including training, for the waters of the State, including offshore marine waters, to enable the State to respond to an emergency oil or other hazardous substances spillage. In carrying out its duties under this section, designated representatives of the State Emergency Response Commission, the Board of Transportation, the Wildlife Resources Commission, the Environmental Management Commission, the Division of Marine Fisheries, the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Office of the Department of Administration, and any other agency or agencies of the State which the State Emergency Response Commission shall deem necessary and appropriate, shall confer and establish plans and procedures for the assignment and utilization of personnel,

equipment and material to be used in carrying out the purposes of this Part. Every State agency involved is authorized to adopt such rules as shall be necessary to effectuate the purposes of this section.

(b) Cooperative Effort. – The Board of Transportation, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, the Division of Marine Fisheries, and any other agency of this State and any local agency designated by the State shall cooperate with and lend assistance to the Commission by assigning to the Commission upon its request personnel, equipment, and material to be utilized in any project or activity related to the containment, collection, dispersal, or removal of oil or other hazardous substances discharged upon the land or discharged into waters affecting this State.

(c) Trucks. – The Secretary of Transportation may, after consultation with the Secretary of Environmental Quality, purchase and equip a sufficient number of trucks designed to carry out the provisions of subsection (b) of this section. These trucks shall be maintained by the Department of Transportation and shall be strategically located at various locations throughout the State so as to furnish a ready response when word of an oil or other hazardous substances discharge has been received. The Secretary of Environmental Quality or his designee will, after consultation, decide where the trucks are to be located.

(d) Rules. – The Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Environmental Quality or their designees shall adopt rules for the placement of these trucks and shall determine the manner and way in which they are to be used. The Secretary of Environmental Quality shall reimburse the Department of Transportation for expenses incurred by the Department of Transportation during cleanups as provided in G.S. 143-215.88.

(e) Accounts. – Every State agency or other State-designated local agency participating in the containment, collection, dispersal, or removal of an oil or other hazardous substances discharge or in restoration necessitated by such discharge, shall keep a record of all expenses incurred in carrying out any such project or activity including the actual services performed by the agency's personnel and the use of the agency's personnel and the use of the agency's equipment and material. A copy of all records shall be delivered to the Commission upon completion of the project or activity. (1973, c. 507, s. 5; c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, ss. 18, 19; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 195; 1989, c. 656, s. 3; c. 727, ss. 164, 165; 1997-443, s. 11A.119(a); 2015-241, s. 14.30(v).)

§ 143-215.87. Oil or Other Hazardous Substances Pollution Protection Fund.

There is hereby established under the control and direction of the Department an Oil or Other Hazardous Substances Pollution Protection Fund which shall be a nonlapsing, revolving fund consisting of any moneys appropriated for such purpose by the General Assembly or that shall be available to it from any other source. The moneys shall be used to defray the expenses of any project or program for the containment, collection, dispersal or removal of oil or other hazardous substances discharged to the land or waters of this State, or discharged into waters outside the territorial limits of the State which affect land and waters or related uses within the State; to assess damages for injury to, destruction of, or loss of use of natural resources; and to develop and implement plans for restoration, rehabilitation, replacement, or acquisition of the equivalent of the natural resources injured by the discharge. In addition to any moneys that shall be appropriated or otherwise made available to it, the fund shall be maintained by fees, charges, or other moneys except for the clear proceeds of civil penalties paid to or recovered by or on behalf of the Department under the provisions of this Part. Any moneys paid to or recovered by or on behalf of the Department as fees, charges, or other payments as damages authorized by this Part except for

the clear proceeds of civil penalties shall be paid to the Oil or Other Hazardous Substances Pollution Protection Fund in an amount equal to the sums expended from the fund for the project or activity.

The clear proceeds of civil penalties provided for in this section shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, s. 20; 1989, c. 656, s. 4; 1993, c. 402, s. 10; 1998-215, s. 67(b).)

§ 143-215.88. Payment to State agencies or State-designated local agencies.

Upon completion of any oil or other hazardous substances removal or restoration project or activity conducted pursuant to the provisions of this Part, each agency of the State or any State-designated local agency that has participated by furnishing personnel, equipment or material shall deliver to the Department a record of the expenses incurred by the agency. The amount of incurred expenses shall be disbursed by the Secretary to each such agency from the Oil or Other Hazardous Substances Pollution Protection Fund. Upon completion of any oil or other hazardous substances removal or restoration project or activity, the Secretary shall prepare a statement of all expenses and costs of the project or activity expended by the State and shall make demand for payment upon the person having control over the oil or other hazardous substances discharged to the land or waters of the State, unless the Commission shall determine that the discharge occurred due to any of the reasons stated in G.S. 143-215.83(b). Any person having control of oil or other hazardous substances discharged to the land or waters of the State in violation of the provisions of this Part and any other person causing or contributing to the discharge of oil or other hazardous substances shall be directly liable to the State for the necessary expenses of oil or other hazardous substances cleanup projects and activities arising from such discharge and the State shall have a cause of action to recover from any or all such persons. If the person having control over the oil or other hazardous substances discharged shall fail or refuse to pay the sum expended by the State, the Secretary shall refer the matter to the Attorney General of North Carolina, who shall institute an action in the name of the State in the Superior Court of Wake County, or in his discretion, in the superior court of the county in which the discharge occurred, to recover such cost and expenses. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1977, c. 858, s. 2; 1979, c. 535, ss. 21, 22; 1987, c. 827, s. 154.)

§ 143-215.88A. Enforcement procedures: civil penalties.

(a) Any person who intentionally or negligently discharges oil or other hazardous substances, or knowingly causes or permits the discharge of oil in violation of this Part or fails to report a discharge as required by G.S. 143-215.85 or who fails to comply with the requirements of G.S. 143-215.84(a) or orders issued by the Commission as a result of violations thereof, shall incur, in addition to any other penalty provided by law, a penalty in an amount not to exceed five thousand dollars ($5,000) for every such violation, the amount to be determined by the Secretary after taking into consideration the factors set out in G.S. 143B-282.1(b), the amount expended by the violator in complying with the provisions of G.S. 143-215.84, and the estimated damages attributed to the violator under G.S. 143-215.90. Every act or omission which causes, aids or abets a violation of this subsection shall be considered a violation under the provisions of this subsection and subject to the penalty herein provided. The procedures set out in G.S. 143-215.6 and G.S. 143B-282.1 shall apply to civil penalties assessed under this section. The penalty herein provided for shall become due and payable when the person incurring the penalty receives a notice in writing from the Commission describing the violation with reasonable particularity and advising such person that the penalty is due. A person may contest a penalty by filing a petition for a contested case under

G.S. 150B-23 within 30 days after receiving notice of the penalty. If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after notice of assessment has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the Superior Court of any county in which the violator resides or has his or its principal place of business to recover the amount of the assessment, unless the violator contests the assessment as provided in this subsection, or requests remission of the assessment in whole or in part. If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after the final agency decision or court order has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the Superior Court of any county in which the violator resides or has his or its principal place of business to recover the amount of the assessment. Notification received pursuant to this subsection or information obtained by the exploitation of such notification shall not be used against any person in any criminal case, except as prosecution for perjury or for giving a false statement.

(b) The civil penalties provided by this section, except the civil penalty for failure to report, shall not apply to the discharge of a pesticide regulated by the North Carolina Pesticide Board, if such discharge would constitute a violation of the North Carolina Pesticide Law and if such discharge has not entered the surface waters of the State.

(c) The clear proceeds of civil penalties provided for in this section shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1973, c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, ss. 25, 26; 1987, c. 270; c. 827, ss. 154, 197; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1036, s. 6; c. 1045, s. 7; c. 1075, s. 8; 1998-215, s. 67(a).)

§ 143-215.88B. Enforcement procedures: criminal penalties.

(a) No proceeding shall be brought or continued under this section for or on account of a violation by any person who has previously been convicted of a federal violation based upon the same set of facts.

(b) In proving the defendant's possession of actual knowledge, circumstantial evidence may be used, including evidence that the defendant took affirmative steps to shield himself from relevant information. Consistent with the principles of common law, the subjective mental state of defendants may be inferred from their conduct.

(c) For the purposes of the felony provisions of this section, a person's state of mind shall not be found "knowingly and willfully" or "knowingly" if the conduct that is the subject of the prosecution is the result of any of the following occurrences or circumstances:

(1) A natural disaster or other act of God which could not have been prevented or avoided by the exercise of due care or foresight.

(2) An act of third parties other than agents, employees, contractors, or subcontractors of the defendant.

(3) An act done in reliance on the written advice or emergency on-site direction of an employee of the Department. In emergencies, oral advice may be relied upon if written confirmation is delivered to the employee as soon as practicable after receiving and relying on the advice.

(4) An act causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to the public health, safety, or welfare and done in compliance with other conflicting environmental requirements or other constraints imposed in writing by environmental agencies or officials after written notice is delivered to all relevant agencies that the conflict exists and will cause a violation of the identified standard.

(5) Violations of permit limitations causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to the public health, safety, or welfare for which no enforcement action or civil penalty could have been imposed under any written civil enforcement guidelines in use by the Department at the time, including but not limited to, guidelines for the pretreatment permit civil penalties. This subdivision shall not be construed to require the Department to develop or use written civil enforcement guidelines.

(d) All general defenses, affirmative defenses, and bars to prosecution that may apply with respect to other criminal offenses under State criminal offenses may apply to prosecutions brought under this section or other criminal statutes that refer to this section and shall be determined by the courts of this State according to the principles of common law as they may be applied in the light of reason and experience. Concepts of justification and excuse applicable under this section may be developed in the light of reason and experience.

(e) Any person who knowingly and willfully discharges or causes or permits the discharge of oil or other hazardous substances in violation of this Part shall be guilty of a Class H felony which may include a fine to be not more than one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) per day of violation, provided that this fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) for each period of 30 days during which a violation continues. For the purposes of this subsection, the phrase "knowingly and willfully" shall mean intentionally and consciously as the courts of this State, according to the principles of common law interpret the phrase in the light of reason and experience.

(f)(1) Any person who knowingly discharges or causes or permits the discharge of oil or other hazardous substances in violation of this Part, and who knows at that time that he places another person in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury shall be guilty of a Class C felony which may include a fine not to exceed two hundred fifty thousand dollars ($250,000) per day of violation, provided that this fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of one million dollars ($1,000,000) for each period of 30 days during which a violation continues.

(2) For the purposes of this subsection, a person's state of mind is knowing with respect to:

a. His conduct, if he is aware of the nature of his conduct;

b. An existing circumstance, if he is aware or believes that the circumstance exists; or

c. A result of his conduct, if he is aware or believes that his conduct is substantially certain to cause danger of death or serious bodily injury.

(3) Under this subsection, in determining whether a defendant who is a natural person knew that his conduct placed another person in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury:

a. The person is responsible only for actual awareness or actual belief that he possessed; and

b. Knowledge possessed by a person other than the defendant but not by the defendant himself may not be attributed to the defendant.

(4) It is an affirmative defense to a prosecution under this subsection that the conduct charged was conduct consented to by the person endangered and that the danger and conduct charged were reasonably foreseeable hazards of an occupation, a business, or a profession; or of medical treatment or medical or

scientific experimentation conducted by professionally approved methods and such other person had been made aware of the risks involved prior to giving consent. The defendant may establish an affirmative defense under this subdivision by a preponderance of the evidence.

(g) The criminal penalties provided by this section shall not apply to the discharge of a pesticide regulated by the North Carolina Pesticide Board, if such discharge would constitute a violation of the North Carolina Pesticide Law and if such discharge has not entered the surface waters of the State.

(h) Any person who knowingly and willfully makes any false statement, representation, or certification in any application, record, report, plan, or other document filed or required to be maintained under this Article or rules adopted under this Article; or who knowingly and willfully makes a false statement of a material fact in a rulemaking proceeding or contested case under this Article; or who falsifies, tampers with, or knowingly and willfully renders inaccurate any recording or monitoring device or method required to be operated or maintained under this Article or rules adopted under this Article is guilty of a Class I felony, which may include a fine not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) per day of violation, provided that the fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) for each period of 30 days during which a violation continues. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1973, c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, ss. 25, 26; 1987, c. 270; c. 827, ss. 154, 197; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1045, s. 8; 1993, c. 539, ss. 1316, 1317; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1997-394, s. 6; 2025-25, s. 29(6).)

§ 143-215.89. Multiple liability for necessary expenses; limit on State recovery.

(a) Any person liable for costs of cleanup of oil or other hazardous substances under this Part shall have a cause of action to recover such costs in part or in whole from any other person causing or contributing to the discharge of oil or other hazardous substances into the waters of the State, including any amount recoverable by the State as necessary expenses.

(b) The total recovery by the State for damage to the public resources pursuant to G.S. 143-215.90 and for the cost of oil or other hazardous substances cleanup, arising from any discharge, shall not exceed the applicable limits prescribed by federal law with respect to the United States government on account of such discharge. The limitations on recovery referenced in this subsection shall not apply to damages recoverable pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94CC. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1979, c. 535, s. 23; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1045, s. 12; 2010-179, s. 1(a).)

§ 143-215.90. Liability for damage to public resources.

(a) Any person who discharges oil or other hazardous substances in violation of this Article or violates any order or rule of the Commission adopted pursuant to this Article, or fails to perform any duty imposed by this Article, or violates an order or other determination of the Commission made pursuant to the provisions of this Article, including the provisions of a discharge permit issued pursuant to G.S. 143-215.1, and in the course thereof causes the death of, or injury to fish, animals, vegetation or other resources of the State or otherwise causes a reduction in the quality of the waters of the State below the standards set by the Commission, shall be liable to pay the State damages. Such damages shall be an amount equal to the cost of all reasonable and necessary investigations made or caused to be made by the Commission in connection with such violation and the sum of money necessary to restock such waters, replenish such resources, or otherwise restore the rivers, streams, bays, tidal flats, beaches, estuaries or coastal waters and public lands adjoining the seacoast to their condition prior to the injury as such condition is determined by the

Commission in conference with the Wildlife Resources Commission, and any other State agencies having an interest affected by such violation (or by the designees of any such boards, commissions, and agencies).

(b) Upon receipt of the estimate of damages caused, the Department shall give written notice by registered or certified mail to the person responsible for the death, killing, or injury to fish, animals, vegetation, or other resources of the State, or any reduction in quality of the waters of the State, describing the damages and their causes with reasonable specificity, and shall request payment from such person. Damages shall become due and payable upon receipt of such notice. A person may contest an assessment of damages by filing a petition for a contested case under G.S. 150B-23 within 30 days after receiving notice of the damages. In a contested case hearing, the estimate of the replacement cost of fish or animals or vegetation destroyed, and the estimate of costs of replacing or restoring other resources of the State, and the estimate of the cost of restoring the quality of waters of the State shall be prima facie evidence of the actual replacement of cost of fish, animals, vegetation or other resources of the State, and of the actual cost of restoring the quality of the waters of the State; provided, that such evidence is rebuttable. In arriving at such estimate, any reasonably accurate method may be used and it shall not be necessary for any agent of the Department or Wildlife Resources Commission to collect, handle, or weigh numerous specimens of dead or injured fish, animals, vegetation or other resources of the State, or to calculate the costs of restoring the quality of the waters using any technology other than that which is existing and practicable, as found to be such by the Secretary. Provided, that the Department may effect such mitigation of the amount of damages as the Commission may deem proper and reasonable. If a person fails to pay damages assessed against him, the Commission shall refer the matter to the Attorney General for collection. Any money recovered by the Attorney General or by payment of damages by the person charged therewith by the Department shall be transferred by the Commission to appropriate funds administered by the State agencies affected by the violation for use in such activities as food fish or shellfish management programs, wildlife and waterfowl management programs, water quality improvement programs and such other uses as may best mitigate the damage incurred as a result of the violation. No action shall be authorized under the provisions of this section against any person operating in compliance with the conditions of a waste discharge permit issued pursuant to G.S. 143-215.1 and the provisions of this Part.

(c) For the purpose of carrying out its duties under this Article, the Commission shall have the power to direct the investigation of any death, killing, or injury to fish, animals, vegetation or other resources of the State, or any reduction in quality of the waters of the State, which in the opinion of the Commission is of sufficient magnitude to justify investigation. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, s. 24; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 196.)

§ 143-215.91: Recodified as §§ 143-215.88A, 143-215.88B.

§ 143-215.91A. Limited liability for volunteers in oil and hazardous substance abatement.

Part 5 of this Article shall apply to the determination of civil liability or penalty pursuant to this Article. (1987, c. 269, s. 3.)

§ 143-215.92. Lien on vessel.

Any vessel (other than one owned or operated by the State of North Carolina or its political subdivisions or the United States government) from which oil or other hazardous substances is discharged in violation of this Part or any rule prescribed pursuant thereto, shall be liable for the

pecuniary penalty and costs of oil or other hazardous substances removal specified in this Part and such penalty and costs shall constitute a lien on such vessel; provided, however, that said lien shall not attach if a surety bond is posted with the Commission in an amount and with sureties acceptable to the Commission, or a cash deposit is made with the Commission in an amount acceptable to the Commission. Provided further, that such lien shall not have priority over any existing perfected lien or security interest. The Commission may adopt rules providing for such conditions, limitations, and requirements concerning the bond or deposit prescribed by this section as the Commission deems necessary. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; c. 1262, s. 23; 1979, c. 535, s. 27; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 198.)

§ 143-215.93. Liability for damage caused.

Any person having control over oil or other hazardous substances which enters the waters of the State in violation of this Part shall be strictly liable, without regard to fault, for damages to persons or property, public or private, caused by such entry, subject to the exceptions enumerated in G.S. 143-215.83(b). (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1979, c. 535, s. 28.)

§ 143-215.93A. Limitation on liability of persons engaged in removal of oil discharges.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, a person is not liable under this Part, Part 2C of this Article, Articles 21 and 21B of this Chapter, other provisions of the General Statutes relating to protection of the environment or public health, Chapter 1B of the General Statutes, or common law causes of action in tort for removal costs or damages which result from, arise out of, or are related to the discharge or threatened discharge of oil, when such removal costs or damages result from acts or omissions in the course of rendering care, assistance, or advice consistent with the National Contingency Plan or as otherwise directed by the President of the United States, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator, the Governor, the Secretary, the Secretary of Public Safety, or any person designated to direct oil discharge removal activities by the President of the United States, the Governor, the Secretary, or the Secretary of Public Safety.

(b) The limitation on liability under subsection (a) of this section does not apply:

(1) To a responsible party;

(2) To a response under CERCLA/SARA or under Part 4 of Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes;

(3) To a response under Part 3 of Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes;

(4) To a cleanup under Part 2A of this Article;

(5) With respect to personal injury or wrongful death; or

(6) If the person is grossly negligent or engages in willful misconduct.

(c) A responsible party is liable for any removal costs and damages that another person is relieved of under this section.

(d) Nothing in this section affects the obligation of an owner or operator to respond immediately to a discharge, or the threat of a discharge, of oil.

(e) As used in this section:

(1) "CERCLA/SARA" means the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-510, 94 Stat. 2767, 42 U.S.C. § 9601 et seq., as amended, and the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-499, 100 Stat. 1613, as amended.

(2) "Damages" has the same meaning as in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, 33 U.S.C. § 2701, and G.S. 143-215.94BB.

(3) "Federal On-Scene Coordinator" means a person designated as such in the National Contingency Plan.
(4) "National Contingency Plan" has the same meaning as in 33 U.S.C. § 1321, as amended.
(5) "Oil Pollution Act of 1990" means the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-380, 104 Stat. 484, which appears generally as 33 U.S.C. § 2701 et seq., as amended.
(6) "Remove" or "removal" has the same meaning as in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, 33 U.S.C. § 2701.
(7) "Removal costs" has the same meaning as in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, 33 U.S.C. § 2701.
(8) "Responsible party" means a person who is a "responsible party" as defined in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, 33 U.S.C. § 2701, and who is liable for removal costs or damages which result from, arise out of, or are related to the discharge or threatened discharge of oil. (1991, c. 432, s. 1; 2011-145, s. 19.1(g).)

§ 143-215.94. Joint and several liability.

In order to provide maximum protection for the public interest, any actions brought pursuant to G.S. 143-215.88 through 143-215.91(a), 143-215.93 or any other section of this Article, for recovery of cleanup costs or for civil penalties or for damages, may be brought against any one or more of the persons having control over the oil or other hazardous substances or causing or contributing to the discharge of oil or other hazardous substances. All said persons shall be jointly and severally liable, but ultimate liability as between the parties may be determined by common-law principles. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1977, c. 858, s. 3; 1979, c. 535, s. 29.)

Part 2A. Leaking Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Cleanup.

§ 143-215.94A. Definitions.

Unless a different meaning is required by the context, the following definitions shall apply throughout this Part and Part 2B of this Article:

(1a) "Affiliate" has the same meaning as in 17 Code of Federal Regulations § 240.12(b)-2 (1 April 1994 Edition), which defines "affiliate" as a person that directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls, is controlled by, or is under common control of another person.
(1b) "Commercial Fund" means the Commercial Leaking Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Fund established pursuant to this Part.
(2) "Commercial underground storage tank" means any one or combination of tanks (including underground pipes connected thereto) used to contain an accumulation of petroleum products, the volume of which (including the volume of the underground pipes connected thereto) is ten percent (10%) or more beneath the surface of the ground. The term does not include any of the following:
a. Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(b), effective June 25, 2025.
b. Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(b), effective June 25, 2025.
c. Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(b), effective June 25, 2025.
c1. Noncommercial underground storage tank.
d. Septic tank.

e. Pipeline facility (including gathering lines) regulated under any of the following:
    1. The Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968 (49 U.S.C. § 1671 et seq.).
    2. The Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Safety Act of 1979 (49 U.S.C. § 2001 et seq.).
    3. State laws comparable to the provisions of the Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act of 1968 or the Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Safety Act of 1979.
f. Surface impoundment, pit, pond, or lagoon.
g. Storm water or waste water collection system.
h. Flow-through process tank.
i. Liquid trap or associated gathering lines directly related to oil or gas production and gathering operations.
j. Storage tank situated in an underground area (such as a basement, cellar, mineworking, drift, shaft, or tunnel) if the storage tank is situated upon or above the surface of the floor.

(2a) "Cost-effective cleanup" means the cleanup method that meets all of the following criteria:
a. Addresses imminent threats to human health or the environment.
b. Provides for the cleanup or removal of all contaminated soil except in circumstances where it is impractical to remove contaminated soil.
c. Is approved by the Commission for remediation of the site.
d. Is the least expensive cleanup based on total cost, including costs not eligible for reimbursement from the Commercial Fund.

(3) Repealed by Session Laws 2011-266, s. 1.20(b), effective July 1, 2011.

(3a) "Facility" means an underground storage tank, or two or more underground storage tanks located in close proximity to each other and having the same owner or operator, that are located on a single tract of land or on contiguous tracts of land that are owned or controlled by the same person. As used in this subdivision, the terms "owner", "operator", and "person" include any affiliate, parent, and subsidiary of the owner, operator, or person, respectively. The owner or person having control of the land on which an underground storage tank is located, or on which two or more underground storage tanks are located, need not be the owner or operator of the underground storage tank or underground storage tanks. The term "facility", as defined in this subdivision, does not apply to a "pipeline facility", as that phrase is used in subdivisions (2) and (7) of this section.

(4) "Heating oil" means petroleum that is No. 1, No. 2, No. 4-light, No. 4-heavy, No. 5-light, No. 5-heavy, or No. 6 technical grades of fuel oil; other residual fuel oils, including Navy Special Fuel Oil and Bunker C; and other fuels when used as substitutes for one of these fuel oils for the purpose of heating.

(5) Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(a)(1), effective June 26, 2025.

(6) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(d), effective December 31, 2016.

(7) "Noncommercial underground storage tank" means any one or combination of the following tanks (including underground pipes connected thereto) used to contain an accumulation of petroleum products, the volume of which (including the volume of the underground pipes connected thereto) is ten percent (10%) or more beneath the surface of the ground:

a. Farm or residential underground storage tank of 1,100 gallons or less capacity used for storing motor fuel for noncommercial purposes.

b. Underground storage tank of 1,100 gallons or less capacity used for storing heating oil for consumptive use on the premises where stored.

c. Underground storage tank of more than 1,100 gallon capacity used for storing heating oil for consumptive use on the premises where stored by four or fewer households.

(8) "Operator" means any person in control of, or having responsibility for, the operation of an underground storage tank.

(9) "Owner" means:

a. In the case of an underground storage tank in use on 8 November 1984, or brought into use after that date, any person who owns an underground storage tank used for the storage, use, or dispensing of petroleum products; and

b. In the case of an underground storage tank in use before 8 November 1984, but no longer in use on or after that date, any person who owned such tank immediately before the discontinuation of its use.

(9a) "Parent" has the same meaning as in 17 Code of Federal Regulations § 240.12(b)-2 (1 April 1994 Edition), which defines "parent" as an affiliate that directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls another person.

(10) "Petroleum" or "petroleum product" means crude oil or any fraction thereof which is a liquid at standard conditions of temperature and pressure (60 degrees Fahrenheit and 14.7 pounds per square inch absolute), including any such liquid which consists of a blend of petroleum and alcohol and which is intended for use as a motor fuel. The terms "petroleum" and "petroleum product" do not include any hazardous substance as defined in Section 101(14) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-510, 94 Stat. 2767, 42 U.S.C. § 9601(14) as amended; any substance regulated as a hazardous waste under Subtitle C of Title II of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, Pub. L. 94-580, 90 Stat. 2806, 42 U.S.C. § 6921 et seq., as amended; or any mixture of petroleum or a petroleum product containing any such hazardous substance or hazardous waste in greater than de minimis quantities.

(11) "Subsidiary" has the same meaning as in 17 Code of Federal Regulations § 240.12(b)-2 (1 April 1994 Edition), which defines "subsidiary" as an affiliate that is directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controlled by another person.

(12) "Third party" means a person other than the owner or operator of an underground storage tank from which a release has occurred or employees or agents of an owner or operator. A property owner shall not be considered a third

party if the property was transferred by the owner or operator of an underground storage tank in anticipation of damage due to a release.

(13) "Third-party bodily injury" or "bodily injury" when used in connection with "third-party" means specific physical bodily injury proximately resulting from exposure, explosion, or fire caused by the presence of a petroleum release and that is incurred by a person other than the owner or operator of an underground storage tank from which a release has occurred or employees or agents of an owner or operator.

(14) "Third-party property damage" or "property damage" when used in connection with "third-party" means actual physical damage or damage due to specific loss of normal use that proximately resulted from exposure, explosion, or fire caused by the presence of a petroleum release and that is incurred to property owned by a person other than the owner or operator of an underground storage tank from which a release has occurred or employees or agents of an owner or operator. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, s. 3; 1991, c. 538, s. 1; 1995, c. 377, s. 4; 1997-456, s. 27; 2003-352, s. 1; 2011-266, s. 1.20(b); 2015-241, s. 14.16A(d); 2015-263, s. 20(b); 2025-25, s. 21(a), (b).)

§ 143-215.94B. Commercial Leaking Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Fund.

(a) There is established under the control and direction of the Department the Commercial Leaking Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Fund. This Commercial Fund shall be a nonreverting revolving fund consisting of any monies appropriated for such purpose by the General Assembly or available to it from grants, other monies paid to it or recovered on behalf of the Commercial Fund, and fees paid pursuant to this Part.

(b) The Commercial Fund shall be used for the payment of the following costs up to an aggregate maximum of one million dollars ($1,000,000) per occurrence resulting from a discharge or release of a petroleum product from a commercial underground storage tank:

(1) For discharges or releases discovered or reported between 30 June 1988 and 31 December 1991 inclusive, the cleanup of environmental damage as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a) in excess of fifty thousand dollars ($50,000) per occurrence.

(2) For discharges or releases discovered on or after 1 January 1992 and reported between 1 January 1992 and 31 December 1993 inclusive, the cleanup of environmental damage as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a) in excess of twenty thousand dollars ($20,000) per occurrence.

(2a) For discharges or releases discovered and reported on or after 1 January 1994 and prior to 1 January 1995, the cleanup of environmental damage as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a) in excess of twenty thousand dollars ($20,000) if the owner or operator (i) notifies the Department prior to 1 January 1994 of its intent to permanently close the tank in accordance with applicable regulations or to upgrade the tank to meet the requirements that existing underground storage tanks must meet by 22 December 1998, (ii) commences closure or upgrade of the tank prior to 1 July 1994, and (iii) completes closure or upgrade of the tank prior to 1 January 1995.

(3) For discharges or releases reported on or after 1 January 1994, the cleanup of environmental damage as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a) in excess of twenty

thousand dollars ($20,000) if, prior to the discharge or release, the commercial underground storage tank from which the discharge or release occurred met the performance standards applicable to tanks installed after 22 December 1988 or met the requirements that existing underground storage tanks must meet by 22 December 1998.

(4) For discharges or releases reported on or after 1 January 1994 from a commercial underground storage tank that does not qualify under subdivision (2a) of this subsection or does not meet the standards in subdivision (3) of this subsection, sixty percent (60%) of the costs per occurrence of the cleanup of environmental damage as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a) that exceeds twenty thousand dollars ($20,000) but is not more than one hundred fifty-seven thousand five hundred dollars ($157,500) and one hundred percent (100%) of the costs above this amount, up to the limits established in this section.

(5) Compensation to third parties for bodily injury and property damage in excess of one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) per occurrence. Claims for third-party property damage shall be based on the rental costs of comparable property during the period of loss of use up to a maximum amount equal to the fair market value. In the case of property that is actually destroyed as a result of a petroleum release, reimbursement shall be at an amount necessary to replace or repair the destroyed property.

(6) Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(a), effective June 26, 2025.

(7) Recordation of residual petroleum as required by G.S. 143B-279.11 if the Commercial Fund is responsible for the payment of costs under subdivisions (1) through (4) of this subsection.

(8) The costs of a site investigation required by the Department for the purpose of determining whether a release from a tank system has occurred, whether or not the investigation confirms that a release has occurred. This subdivision shall not be construed to allow reimbursement for costs of investigations that are part of routine leak detection procedures required by statute or rule.

(9) If the owner or operator cannot be identified or fails to proceed with the cleanup.

(10) That was taken out of operation prior to 1 January 1974 if, at the time the discharge or release is discovered, neither the owner nor operator owns or leases the lands on which the tank is located.

(11) Where the owner of the commercial underground storage tank is the owner only as a result of owning the land on which the commercial underground storage tank is located, the owner did not know or have reason to know that the underground storage tank was located on the property, and the land was not transferred to the owner to avoid liability for the commercial underground storage tank.

(12) Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(a), effective June 26, 2025.

(b1) In the event that two or more discharges or releases at any one facility, the first of which was discovered or reported on or after 30 June 1988, result in more than one plume of soil, surface water, or groundwater contamination, the Commercial Fund shall be used for the payment of the costs of the cleanup of environmental damage as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a) in excess of the

multiple discharge amount up to the applicable aggregate maximum specified in subsections (b) and (b2) of this section. The multiple discharge amount shall be calculated as follows:

(1) Each discharge or release shall be considered separately as if it were the only discharge or release, and the cost for which the owner or operator is responsible under subdivisions (1), (2), (2a), or (3) of subsection (b) of this section, whichever are applicable, shall be determined for each discharge or release. For each discharge or release for which subdivision (4) of subsection (b) of this section is applicable, the cost for which the owner or operator is responsible, for the purpose of this subsection, shall be seventy-five thousand dollars ($75,000). For purposes of this subsection, two or more discharges or releases that result in a single plume of soil, surface water, or groundwater contamination shall be considered as a single discharge or release.

(2) The multiple discharge amount shall be the lesser of:

a. The sum of all the costs determined as set out in subdivision (1) of this subsection; or

b. The product of the highest of the costs determined as set out in subdivision (1) of this subsection multiplied by one and one-half (1½).

(3) If an owner or operator elects to cleanup a separate discharge or release for which the owner or operator is not responsible, the responsible party for the other discharge cannot be identified, and the discharges are commingled, the owner or operator shall only be responsible for those costs applicable to the discharge for which the owner or operator is actually the responsible party.

(b2) In the event that the aggregate costs per occurrence described in subsection (b) or (b1) of this section exceed one million dollars ($1,000,000), the Commercial Fund shall be used for the payment of eighty percent (80%) of the costs in excess of one million dollars ($1,000,000) up to a maximum of one million five hundred thousand dollars ($1,500,000). The Department shall not pay or reimburse costs under this subsection unless the owner, operator, or landowner eligible for reimbursement under G.S. 143-215.94E(b1) submits proof that the owner, operator, or landowner eligible for reimbursement under G.S. 143-215.94E(b1) has paid at least twenty percent (20%) of the costs for which reimbursement is sought.

(b3) For purposes of subsections (b) and (b1) of this section, the cleanup of environmental damage includes connection of a third party to a public water system if the Department determines that connection of the third party to a public water system is a cost-effective measure, when compared to other available measures, to reduce risk to human health or the environment. A payment or reimbursement under this subsection is subject to the requirements and limitations of this section. This subsection shall not be construed to limit any right or remedy available to a third party under any other provision of law. This subsection shall not be construed to require a third party to connect to a public water system. Except as provided by this subsection, connection to a public water system does not constitute cleanup under Part 2 of this Article, G.S. 143-215.94E, G.S. 143-215.94V, any other applicable statute, or at common law.

(b4) The Commercial Fund shall pay any claim made after 1 September 2001 for compensation to third parties pursuant to subdivision (5) of subsection (b) of this section only if the owner, operator, or other party responsible for the discharge or release has complied with the requirements of G.S. 143B-279.9 and G.S. 143B-279.11, unless compliance is prohibited by another provision of law.

(b5) The Commercial Fund may be used by the Department for the payment of costs necessary to render harmless any commercial underground storage tank from which a discharge or release has not occurred but which poses an imminent hazard to the environment if the owner or operator cannot be identified or located, or if the owner or operator fails to take action to render harmless the underground storage tank within 90 days of having been notified of the imminent hazard posed by the underground storage tank. The Secretary shall seek to recover the costs of the action from any owner or operator as provided in G.S. 143-215.94G.

(c) The Commercial Fund is to be available on an occurrence basis, without regard to number of occurrences associated with tanks owned or operated by the same owner or operator.

(d) The Commercial Fund shall not be used for:

(1) Costs incurred as a result of a discharge or release from an aboveground tank, aboveground pipe or fitting not connected to an underground storage tank, or vehicle.

(2) The removal or replacement of any tank, pipe, fitting or related equipment.

(3) Costs incurred as a result of a discharge or release of petroleum from a transmission pipeline.

(4) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(d), effective December 31, 2016.

(5) Costs associated with the administration of any underground storage tank program other than the program administered pursuant to this Part.

(6) Costs paid or reimbursed by or from any source other than the Commercial Fund, including but not limited to, any payment or reimbursement made under a contract of insurance.

(7) Costs incurred as a result of the cleanup of environmental damage to groundwater to a more protective standard than the risk-based standard required by the Department unless the cleanup of environmental damage to groundwater to a more protective standard is necessary to resolve a claim for compensation by a third party for property damage.

(8) Costs in excess of those required to achieve the most cost-effective cleanup.

(e) The Commercial Fund shall be treated as a special trust fund pursuant to G.S. 147-69.2 and G.S. 147-69.3, except that interest and other income received on the Fund balance shall be treated as set forth in G.S. 147-69.1(d).

(f) Expired October 1, 2011, pursuant to Session Laws 2001-442, s. 8, as amended by Session Laws 2008-195, s. 11.

(g) The Commercial Fund may be used to support the administrative functions of the program for underground storage tanks under this Part and Part 2B of this Article up to the amounts allowed by law, which amounts may be changed from time to time. In the case of a legislated increase or decrease in salaries and benefits, the administrative allowance existing at the time of the increase or decrease shall be correspondingly increased or decreased an amount equal to the legislated increase or decrease in salaries and benefits.

(h) The Commercial Fund may be used to reimburse the owner or operator of a commercial petroleum underground storage tank for annual operating fees that were paid under protest pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94C(f) to the extent the Department has recovered the fees from the previous owner or operator from whom the annual operating fees were due. The Commercial Fund may be used only to reimburse those fees that the owner or operator paid to eliminate an unpaid

annual operating fees balance that had been accrued by and was the obligation of a previous owner or operator.

(i) During each fiscal year, the Department shall use up to two million dollars ($2,000,000) of the funds in the Commercial Fund to fund necessary assessment and cleanup to be conducted by the Department of discharges or releases for which a responsible party has been identified but for which the responsible party can demonstrate that undertaking the costs of assessment and cleanup will impose a severe financial hardship. Any portion of the two million dollars ($2,000,000) designated each fiscal year, which is not used during that fiscal year to address situations of severe financial hardship, shall revert to the Commercial Fund for the uses otherwise provided by this section. The Commission shall adopt rules to define severe financial hardship; establish criteria for assistance due to severe financial hardship pursuant to this section; and establish a process for evaluation and determinations of eligibility with respect to applications for assistance due to severe financial hardship. The Commission shall create a subcommittee of the Commission's Committee on Civil Penalty Remissions as established by G.S. 143B-282.1 to render determinations of eligibility under this subsection.

(j) When a state of emergency, as defined in G.S. 166A-19.3, has been declared by the Governor due to a natural disaster such as a hurricane, tornado, or flood, or due to a pending disaster, the Department may, with the consent of the owner, operator, or landowner, issue reimbursements to contractors or third parties who are under contract with the owner, operator, or landowner to address occurrences as described in subsections (b) and (b1) of this section. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, ss. 4, 16; 1991, c. 538, ss. 2, 3; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 817, s. 1; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; c. 402, s. 1; 1995, c. 377, s. 5; 1998-161, s. 2; 2001-384, ss. 4, 5, 8; 2001-442, s. 1; 2003-352, ss. 2, 3; 2007-323, s. 12.1(a); 2008-195, s. 11; 2008-198, s. 7(a); 2011-394, ss. 11.1, 11.2, 11.3(a); 2012-200, s. 13(a); 2014-100, s. 14.21(g); 2015-241, s. 14.16A(a), (d); 2015-263, s. 20(c); 2021-180, s. 12.6; 2024-53, s. 4C.9; 2025-25, s. 21(a).)

§ 143-215.94C. Commercial leaking petroleum underground storage tank cleanup fees.

(a) For purposes of this subsection, each compartment of a commercial underground storage tank that is designed to independently contain a petroleum product is a separate petroleum commercial underground storage tank. The owner or operator of a commercial petroleum underground storage tank shall pay to the Secretary for deposit into the Commercial Fund an annual operating fee of four hundred ninety-eight dollars ($498.00) for each petroleum commercial underground storage tank.

(b) The annual operating fee shall be determined on a calendar year basis. For petroleum commercial underground storage tanks in use on 1 January and remaining in use on or after 1 December of that year, the annual operating fee due for that year shall be as specified in subsection (a) of this section. For a petroleum commercial underground storage tank that is first placed in service in any year, the annual operating fee due for that year shall be determined by multiplying one-twelfth (1/12) of the amount specified in subsection (a) of this section by the number of months remaining in the calendar year. For a petroleum commercial underground storage tank that is permanently removed from service in any year, the annual operating fee due for that year shall be determined by multiplying one-twelfth (1/12) of the amount specified in subsection (a) of this section by the number of months in the calendar year preceding the permanent removal from use. In calculating the pro rata annual operating fee for a tank that is first placed in use or permanently removed during a calendar year under the preceding two sentences, a partial month shall count as a month, except that where a tank is permanently removed and replaced by another tank, the total of

the annual operating fee for the tank that is removed and the replacement tank shall not exceed the annual operating fee for the replacement tank. Except as provided in this subsection, the annual operating fee shall be due and payable on the first day of the month in accordance with a staggered schedule established by the Department. The Department shall implement a staggered schedule to the end that the total amount of fees to be collected by the Department is approximately the same each quarter. A person who owns or operates more than one petroleum commercial underground storage tank may request that the fee for all tanks be due at the same time. A person may request that the total of all fees be paid in four equal payments to be due on the first day of each calendar quarter.

(c) Beginning no later than sixty days before the first due date of the annual operating fee imposed by this section, any person who deposits a petroleum product in a commercial underground storage tank that would be subject to the annual operating fee shall, at least once in each calendar year during which such deposit of a petroleum product is made, notify the owner or operator of the duty to pay the annual operating fee. The requirement to notify pursuant to this subsection does not constitute a duty owed by the person depositing a petroleum product in a commercial underground storage tank to the owner or operator and the person depositing a petroleum product in an underground storage tank shall not incur any liability to the owner or operator for failure to give notice of the duty to pay the operating fee.

(d) Repealed by Session Laws 1991, c. 538, s. 3.1.

(e) An owner or operator of a commercial underground storage tank who fails to pay an annual operating fee due under this section within 30 days of the date that the fee is due shall pay, in addition to the fee, a late penalty of six dollars ($6.00) per day per commercial underground storage tank, up to a maximum equal to the annual operating fee due. The Department may waive a late penalty in whole or in part if:

(1) The late penalty was incurred because of the late payment or nonpayment of an annual operating fee by a previous owner or operator.

(2) The late penalty was incurred because of a billing error for which the Department is responsible.

(3) Where the late penalty was incurred because the annual operating fee was not paid by the owner or operator due to inadvertence or accident.

(4) Where payment of the late penalty will prevent the owner or operator from complying with any substantive law, rule, or regulation applicable to underground storage tanks and intended to prevent or mitigate discharges or releases or to facilitate the early detection of discharges or releases.

(f) A person who becomes the owner or operator of a commercial petroleum underground storage tank may pay, under protest, unpaid annual operating fees that were the obligation of a previous owner or operator for the purpose of obtaining an operating permit for the underground storage tanks. An owner or operator who pays unpaid operating fees that were due from a previous owner or operator may request reimbursement of those fees as provided in G.S. 143-215.94B(h). In collecting unpaid annual operating fees, the Department shall diligently seek to collect unpaid annual operating fees from the person who was the owner or operator of the commercial petroleum underground storage tank at the time the fee first became due notwithstanding the fact that those fees were paid under protest as provided in this subsection. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, ss. 5, 16; 1991, c. 538, ss. 3.1, 4, 5; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; c. 402, s. 2; 1995, c. 377, s. 6; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 648, s. 2; 2008-195, s. 1; 2008-198, s. 7(b); 2011-394, s. 11.3(c).)

§ 143-215.94D: Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(d), effective December 31, 2016.

§ 143-215.94E. Rights and obligations of the owner or operator.

(a) Upon a determination that a discharge or release of petroleum from an underground storage tank has occurred, the owner or operator of the underground storage tank shall notify the Department pursuant to G.S. 143-215.85. The owner or operator of the underground storage tank shall immediately undertake to collect and remove the discharge or release and to restore the area affected in accordance with the requirements of this Article.

(a1) If a spill or overfill associated with a petroleum underground storage tank results in a release of petroleum to the environment of 25 gallons or more or causes a sheen on nearby surface water, the owner or operator of the petroleum underground storage tank shall immediately clean up the spill or overfill, report the spill or overfill to the Department within 24 hours of the spill or overfill, and begin to restore the area affected in accordance with the requirements of this Article. The owner or operator of a petroleum underground storage tank shall immediately clean up a spill or overfill of less than 25 gallons of petroleum that does not cause a sheen on nearby surface water. If a spill or overfill of less than 25 gallons of petroleum cannot be cleaned up within 24 hours of the spill or overfill or causes a sheen on nearby surface water, the owner or operator of the petroleum underground storage tank shall immediately notify the Department.

(b) In the case of a discharge or release from a commercial underground storage tank where the owner or operator has been identified and has proceeded with cleanup, the owner or operator may elect to have the Commercial Fund pay or reimburse the owner or operator for any costs described in subsection (b) or (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94B that exceed the amounts for which the owner or operator is responsible under that subsection. The sum of payments by the owner or operator and the payments from the Commercial Fund shall not exceed one million dollars ($1,000,000) per discharge or release except as provided in G.S. 143-215.94B(b2).

(b1) In the case of a discharge or release from a commercial underground storage tank where the owner and operator cannot be identified or located, or where the owner and operator fail to proceed as required by subsection (a) of this section, the following requirements apply:

(1) If the current landowner of the land in which the commercial underground storage tank is located notifies the Department in accordance with G.S. 143-215.85 and undertakes to collect and remove the discharge or release and to restore the area affected in accordance with the requirements of this Article and applicable federal and State laws, regulations, and rules, the current landowner may elect to have the Commercial Fund pay or reimburse the current landowner for any costs described in subdivisions (1), (2), (2a), (3), and (4) of G.S. 143-215.94B(b) or G.S. 143-215.94B(b1) that exceed the amounts for which the owner or operator is responsible under that subsection. The following provisions also apply:

a. The current landowner is not eligible for payment or reimbursement until the current landowner has paid the costs described in subdivisions (1), (2), (2a), (3), and (4) of G.S. 143-215.94B(b) or G.S. 143-215.94B(b1) for which the owner or operator is responsible.

b. Eligibility for reimbursement under this subsection may be transferred from a current landowner who has paid the costs described in

subdivisions (1), (2), (2a), (3), and (4) of G.S. 143-215.94B(b) or G.S. 143-215.94B(b1) to a subsequent landowner.

The current landowner shall submit documentation of all expenditures as required by G.S. 143-215.94G(b).

(c), (c1) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(e), effective December 31, 2016.

(d) In any case where the costs described in G.S. 143-215.94B(b) or 143-215.94B(b1), exceed one million dollars ($1,000,000), or one million five hundred thousand dollars ($1,500,000) if G.S. 143-215.94B(b2) applies, the provisions of Article 21A of this Chapter or any other applicable statute or common law principle regarding liability shall apply for the amount in excess of one million dollars ($1,000,000) or, if G.S. 143-215.94B(b2) applies, one million five hundred thousand dollars ($1,500,000). Nothing contained in this Part shall limit or modify any liability that any party may have pursuant to Article 21A of this Chapter, any other applicable statute, or at common law.

(e) An owner, operator, or landowner that pays the costs described in subsection (b) or (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94B resulting from a discharge or release of petroleum from a commercial underground storage tank may seek reimbursement from the Commercial Fund in accordance with this section.

(e1) The Department may contract for any services necessary to evaluate any claim for reimbursement or compensation from the Commercial Fund and may contract for any expert witness or consultant services necessary to defend any decision to pay or deny any claim for reimbursement. The Department may pay the cost of these services from the fund. In any fiscal year, however, the Department shall not expend more than one percent (1%) of the unobligated balance of the fund on 30 June of the previous fiscal year. The cost of contractual services authorized by this subsection are considered costs under subsections (b) and (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94B.

(e2) An owner or operator whose claim for reimbursement is denied may appeal a decision of the Department as provided in Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. If the owner or operator is eligible for reimbursement under this section and the cleanup extends beyond a period of three months, the owner or operator may apply to the Department for interim reimbursements to which he is entitled under this section on a quarterly basis. If the Department fails to notify an owner or operator of its decision on a claim for reimbursement under this section within 90 days after the date the claim is received by the Department, the owner or operator may elect to consider the claim to have been denied, and may appeal the denial as provided in Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

(e3) The Department shall not pay any third party or reimburse any owner or operator who has paid any third party pursuant to any settlement agreement or consent judgment relating to a claim by or on behalf of a third party for compensation for bodily injury or property damage unless the Department has approved the settlement agreement or consent judgment prior to entry into the settlement agreement or consent judgment by the parties or entry of a consent judgment by the court. The approval or disapproval by the Department of a proposed settlement agreement or consent judgment shall be subject to challenge only in a contested case filed under Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

(e4)(1) If the owner or operator takes initial steps to collect and remove the discharge or release as required by the Department and completes the initial assessment required to determine degree of risk, the owner or operator shall not be subject to any violation or penalty for any failure to proceed with further assessment or cleanup under G.S. 143-215.84 or this section before the owner or

operator is authorized to proceed with further assessment or cleanup as provided in subsection (e5) of this section. The lack of availability of funds in the Commercial Fund shall not relieve an owner or operator of responsibility to immediately undertake to collect and remove the discharge or release or to conduct any assessment or cleanup ordered by the Department or be a defense against any violations and penalties issued to the owner or operator for failure to conduct required assessment or cleanup.

(2) The Department shall establish the degree of risk to human health and the environment posed by a discharge or release of petroleum from a commercial underground storage tank and shall determine a schedule for further assessment and cleanup that is based on the degree of risk to human health and the environment posed by the discharge or release and that gives priority to the assessment and cleanup of discharges and releases that pose the greatest risk. If any of the costs of assessment and cleanup of the discharge or release from a commercial underground storage tank are eligible to be paid or reimbursed from the Commercial Fund, the Department shall also consider the availability of funds in the Commercial Fund and the order in which the discharge or release was reported in determining the schedule.

(3) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(e), effective December 31, 2016.

(4) The Department may revise the schedules that apply to the assessment and cleanup of any discharge or release at any time based on its reassessment of any of the foregoing factors.

(e5) (1) As used in this subsection:

a. "Authorization" means a determination by the Department that a person may proceed with one or more tasks associated with the assessment or cleanup of a discharge or release from a petroleum underground storage tank. To "authorize" means to make such a determination.

b. "Preapproval" means a determination by the Department that:

1. The nature and scope of a task is reasonable and necessary to be performed under subsection (b) or (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94B in order to achieve the purposes of this Part.

2. The amount estimated for the cost of a task does not exceed the amount or rate that is reasonable for that task.

(2) The Department may require an owner, operator, or landowner to obtain preapproval before proceeding with any task. The Department shall specify those tasks for which preapproval is required. The Department shall deny any request for payment or reimbursement of the cost of any task for which preapproval is required if the owner, operator, or landowner failed to obtain preapproval of the task. Preapproval of a task by the Department does not guarantee payment or reimbursement in the amount estimated for the cost of the task at the time preapproval is requested. The Department shall pay or reimburse the cost of a task only if all of the following apply:

a. The cost is eligible to be paid under subsection (b) or (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94B.

b. Payment is in accordance with G.S. 143-215.94B(d).

c. The Department determines that the cost is reasonable and necessary.

(3) The Commission may adopt rules governing payment or reimbursement of reasonable and necessary costs and, consistent with any rules adopted by the Commission, the Department shall develop, implement, and periodically revise a schedule of costs that the Department determines to be reasonable and necessary costs for specific tasks. Statements that specify tasks for which preapproval is required and schedules of reasonable and necessary costs for specific tasks are statements within the meaning of G.S. 150B-2(8a)g. This subsection does not invalidate any rule of the Commission related to preapproval of tasks that will result in a cost that is eligible to be paid or reimbursed under subsection (b) or (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94B. The Department may specify tasks for which preapproval is required in addition to any specified by the Commission.

(4) In all cases, the Department shall require an owner, operator, or landowner to submit documentation sufficient to establish that a claim is eligible to be paid or reimbursed under this Part before the Department pays or reimburses the claim.

(5) The Department shall authorize a task the cost of which is to be paid or reimbursed from the Commercial Fund only when the task is scheduled to be performed on the basis of a priority determination pursuant to subsection (e4) of this section. The Department shall not pay or reimburse the cost of any task for which authorization is required under this subsection until the Department has preapproved and authorized the task.

(6) Except as provided in subdivisions (8) and (9) of this subsection, the Department shall not authorize any task the cost of which is to be paid or reimbursed from the Commercial Fund unless the Department determines, based on the scope of the work to be performed and the schedule of reasonable and necessary costs, that sufficient funds will be available in the Commercial Fund to pay or reimburse the cost of that task within 90 days after the Department determines that the owner, operator, or landowner has submitted a claim with documentation sufficient to establish that the claim is eligible to be paid under this Part.

(7) This subsection shall not be construed to establish a cause of action against the Commission or the Department for any failure to pay or reimburse any cost within any specific period of time. This subsection shall not be construed to establish a defense to any action to enforce the requirements of either G.S. 143-215.84 or subsection (a) of this section.

(8) The Department may preapprove and authorize for payment or reimbursement from the Commercial Fund a task that has not been authorized pursuant to subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection if the owner, operator, or landowner specifically requests that the task be authorized and agrees that the claim for payment or reimbursement of the task's cost will not be paid until after the Department has paid all claims for payment or reimbursement of costs for tasks the Department has authorized pursuant to subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection.

(9) The Department may preapprove and authorize for payment or reimbursement from the Commercial Fund a task that has not been authorized pursuant to subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection if the discharge or release creates an

emergency situation. An emergency situation exists when a discharge or release of petroleum results in an imminent threat to human health or the environment. A claim for payment or reimbursement of costs for tasks authorized under this subdivision shall be paid or reimbursed on the same basis as tasks authorized under subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection.

(10) Each fiscal year, the Department may preapprove and authorize tasks, the cost of which is to be paid or reimbursed from the Commercial Fund and the sum total of which shall not exceed five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000), that have not been authorized pursuant to subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection for the purpose of completing risk-based management actions leading to no further action or closure. A claim for payment or reimbursement of costs for tasks that are authorized under this subdivision shall be paid or reimbursed on the same basis as tasks that are authorized under subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection.

(f) Repealed by Session Laws 2003-352, s. 6, effective July 27, 2003.

(f1) Any person seeking payment or reimbursement from the Commercial Fund shall certify to the Department that the costs to be paid or reimbursed by the Commercial Fund are not eligible to be paid or reimbursed by or from any other source, including any contract of insurance. If any cost paid or reimbursed by the Commercial Fund is eligible to be paid or reimbursed by or from another source, that cost shall not be paid from, or if paid shall be repaid to, the Commercial Fund. As used in this Part, the phrase "any other source including any contract of insurance" does not include self-insurance.

(g) No owner or operator shall be reimbursed pursuant to this section, and the Department shall seek reimbursement of the Commercial Fund or of the Department for any monies disbursed from the Commercial Fund or expended by the Department if any of the following apply:

(1) The owner or operator has willfully violated any substantive law, rule, or regulation applicable to underground storage tanks and intended to prevent or mitigate discharges or releases or to facilitate the early detection of discharges or releases.

(2) The discharge or release is the result of the owner's or operator's willful or wanton misconduct.

(3) The owner or operator has failed to pay any annual tank operating fee due pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94C.

(h) Subdivision (1) of subsection (g) of this section shall not be construed to limit the right of an owner or operator to contest notices of violation or orders issued by the Department. Subdivision (1) of subsection (g) of this section shall not apply to a payment or reimbursement pursuant to this section if, at the time of the discharge or release, the owner or operator holds a valid operating permit as required by G.S. 143-215.94U.

(i) Repealed by Session Laws 2005-365, s. 1, effective September 8, 2005.

(j) An owner, operator, or landowner shall request that the Department determine whether any of the costs of assessment and cleanup of a discharge or release from a petroleum underground storage tank are eligible to be paid or reimbursed from the Commercial Fund within one year after completion of any task that is eligible to be paid or reimbursed under G.S. 143-215.94B(b) or 143-215.94B(b1).

(k) An owner, operator, or landowner shall request payment or reimbursement from the Commercial Fund for the cost of a task within one year after the completion of the task. The

Department shall deny any request for payment or reimbursement of the cost of any task that would otherwise be eligible to be paid or reimbursed if the request is not received within 12 months after the later of the date on which the:

(1) Department determines that the cost is eligible to be paid or reimbursed.

(2) Task is completed.

If the Department determines after review of the request that additional information is required in order to determine payment eligibility, the Department may allow the applicant up to 30 days to respond to the request for additional information, and this additional response time shall not be included in determining whether a request met the 12-month deadline imposed by this section. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, ss. 7, 16; 1991, c. 538, ss. 7, 22; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 817, s. 2; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; c. 402, s. 3; 1995, c. 377, s. 8; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 648, ss. 3, 4; 1998-161, ss. 4, 5, 8(a), (b), 11(b); 1998-215, s. 68; 2000-172, s. 7.1; 2003-352, ss. 6, 7; 2004-124, s. 30.10(d); 2005-365, ss. 1, 2; 2008-195, s. 2(a); 2010-154, ss. 5, 6; 2011- 398, s. 51; 2015-241, s. 14.16A(e), (i); 2016-94, s. 14.5; 2021-158, s. 6; 2025-25, s. 21(c).)

§ 143-215.94F. Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(a), effective June 26, 2025.

§ 143-215.94G. Authority of the Department to engage in cleanups; actions for fund reimbursement.

(a) If there is a discharge or release of petroleum from any of the following, the Department may use staff, equipment, or materials under its control or provided by other cooperating federal, State, or local agencies and may contract with any agent or contractor it deems appropriate to investigate a release, to develop and implement a cleanup plan, to provide interim alternative sources of drinking water to third parties, and to pay the initial costs for providing permanent alternative sources of drinking water to third parties:

(1) Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(d), effective June 26, 2025.

(2) An underground storage tank whose owner or operator cannot be identified or located.

(3) An underground storage tank whose owner or operator fails to proceed as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a).

(4) A commercial underground storage tank taken out of operation prior to 1 January 1974 if, when the discharge or release is discovered, neither the owner nor operator owns or leases the land on which the underground storage tank is located.

(a1) Every State agency shall provide to the Department to the maximum extent feasible any staff, equipment, and materials that are available and useful to the development and implementation of a cleanup program.

(a2) The cost of any action authorized under subsection (a) of this section shall be paid, to the extent funds are available, from the following sources in the order listed:

(1) Any funds to which the State is entitled under any federal program providing for the cleanup of petroleum discharges or releases from underground storage tanks, including, but not limited to, the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund established pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 4081 and 42 U.S.C. § 6991b(h).

(2) The Commercial Fund.

(a3) Expired October 1, 2011, pursuant to Session Laws 2001-442, s. 8, as amended by Session Laws 2008-195, s. 11.

(b) Whenever the discharge or release of a petroleum product is from a commercial underground storage tank, the Department may supervise the cleanup of environmental damage required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a). If the owner or operator elects to have the Commercial Fund reimburse or pay for any costs allowed under subsection (b) or (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94B, the Department shall require the owner or operator to submit documentation of all expenditures claimed for the purposes of establishing that the owner or operator has spent the amounts required to be paid by the owner or operator pursuant to and in accordance with G.S. 143-215.94E(b). The Department shall allow credit for all expenditures that the Department determines to be reasonable and necessary. The Department shall not pay for any costs for which the Commercial Fund was established until the owner or operator has paid the amounts specified in G.S. 143-215.94E(b).

(c) The Secretary shall keep a record of all expenses incurred for the services of State personnel and for the use of the State's equipment and material.

(d) The Secretary shall seek reimbursement through any legal means available for the following:

(1) Any costs not authorized to be paid from the Commercial Fund.

(2) The amounts provided for in G.S. 143-215.94B(b) or G.S. 143-215.94B(b1) required to be paid for by the owner or operator pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94E(b) if the owner or operator of a commercial underground storage tank is later identified or located.

(3) The amounts provided for in G.S. 143-215.94B(b) or G.S. 143-215.94B(b1) required to be paid for by the owner or operator pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94E(b) if the owner or operator of a commercial underground storage tank failed to proceed as required by G.S. 143-215.94E(a).

(3a) The amounts provided for by G.S. 143-215.94B(b)(5) required to be paid by the owner or operator to third parties for the cost of providing interim alternative sources of drinking water to third parties and the initial cost of providing permanent alternative sources of drinking water to third parties.

(4) Any funds due under G.S. 143-215.94E(g).

(5) Any funds to which the State is entitled under any federal program providing for the cleanup of petroleum discharges or releases from underground storage tanks.

(6) The amounts provided for in G.S. 143-215.94B(b5).

(e) In the event that a civil action is commenced to secure reimbursement pursuant to subdivisions (1) through (4) of subsection (d) of this section, the Secretary may recover, in addition to any amount due, the costs of the action, including but not limited to reasonable attorneys' fees and investigation expenses. Any monies received or recovered as reimbursement shall be paid into the Commercial Fund or other source from which the expenditures were made.

(f) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(f), effective December 31, 2016.

(g) If the Department paid or reimbursed costs that are not authorized to be paid or reimbursed under G.S. 143-215.94B as a result of a misrepresentation by an agent that acted on behalf of an owner, operator, or landowner, the Department shall first seek reimbursement, pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (d) of this section, from the agent of monies paid to or retained by the agent.

(h) The Department shall take administrative action to recover costs or bring a civil action pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (d) of this section to seek reimbursement of costs in accordance with the following time limits:

(1) The Department shall take administrative action to recover costs or bring a civil action to seek reimbursement of costs that are not authorized to be paid from the Commercial Fund under subdivision (1), (2), or (3) of G.S. 143-215.94B(d) within five years after payment.

(2) The Department shall take administrative action to recover costs or bring a civil action to seek reimbursement of costs other than those described in subdivision (1) of this subsection within three years after payment.

(3) Notwithstanding the time limits set out in subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection, the Department may take administrative action to recover costs or bring a civil action to seek reimbursement of costs paid as a result of fraud or misrepresentation at any time.

(i) An administrative action or civil action that is not commenced within the time allowed by subsection (h) of this section is barred.

(j) Except with the consent of the claimant, the Department shall not withhold payment or reimbursement of costs that are authorized to be paid from the Commercial Fund in order to recover any other costs that are in dispute unless the Department is authorized to withhold payment by a final decision in a contested case under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes or by an order or final decision of a court. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652. ss. 9, 16; 1991, c. 538, ss. 8, 23; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; c. 402, s. 4; 1995, c. 377, s. 9; 2001-442, s. 3; 2008-195, ss. 3, 11; 2012-200, s. 13(c); 2015-241, s. 14.16A(f); 2025-25, ss. 21(d), 24(*l*).)

§ 143-215.94H. Financial responsibility.

(a) The Department shall require each owner and operator of a petroleum underground storage tank who is required to demonstrate financial responsibility under rules promulgated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 6991b(d) to maintain evidence of financial responsibility that is the lesser of:

(1) The full amount of the financial responsibility that an owner or operator is required to demonstrate under rules promulgated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 6991b(d).

(2) The amounts required to be paid for by the owner or operator pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94E(b) per occurrence for costs described in G.S. 143-215.94B(b) and G.S. 143-215.94B(b1) if costs are eligible to be paid under those subsections.

(b) Financial responsibility may be established in accordance with rules adopted by the Commission which shall provide that financial responsibility may be established by either insurance, guarantee, surety bond, letter of credit, qualification as a self-insurer, or any combination thereof. The compliance date schedule for demonstrating financial responsibility shall conform to the schedule adopted by the Environmental Protection Agency. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, s. 10; 1993, c. 402, s. 5; 2008-195, s. 4; 2009-570, s. 19.)

§ 143-215.94I. Insurance pools authorized; requirements.

(a) As used in this section, "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Insurance of the State of North Carolina.

(b) Owners and operators of underground storage tanks may demonstrate financial responsibility by establishing insurance pools which provide insurance coverage to pool members in at least the minimum amounts specified in G.S. 143-215.94H. Each such pool shall be operated

by a board of trustees consisting of at least five persons who are elected or appointed officials of pool members. The board of trustees of each pool shall:

(1) Establish terms and conditions of coverage within the pool, including underwriting criteria, applicable deductible levels, the maximum level of claims that the pool will self-insure, and exclusions of coverage;
(2) Ensure that all valid claims are paid promptly;
(3) Take all necessary precautions to safeguard the assets of the pool;
(4) Maintain minutes of its meetings and make those minutes available to the Commissioner;
(5) Designate an administrator to carry out the policies established by the board of trustees and to provide continual management of the pool, and delineate in written minutes of its meetings the areas of authority it delegates to the pool's administrator;
(6) Establish the amount of insurance to be purchased by the pool to provide coverage over and above the claims that are not to be satisfied directly from the pool's resources;
(7) Establish the amount, if any, of aggregate excess insurance coverage to be purchased and maintained in the event that the pool's resources are exhausted in a given fiscal period; and
(8) Establish guidelines for membership in the pool, including the amount of money to be collected from each pool member to form and fund the pool.

(c) The board of trustees may not:

(1) Extend credit to individual members for payment of a premium, except pursuant to payment plans approved by the Commissioner; or
(2) Borrow any monies from the pool or in the name of the pool, except in the ordinary course of business, without first advising the Commissioner of the nature and purpose of the loan and obtaining prior approval from the Commissioner.

(d) A contract or agreement made pursuant to this section must contain provisions:

(1) For a system or program of loss control;
(2) For termination of membership including both:
    a. Cancellation of individual membership in the pool by the pool; and
    b. Election by an individual member of the pool to terminate its participation;
(3) That a pool or a terminating member must provide at least 90 days' written notice of cancellation or termination;
(4) Requiring the pool to pay all claims for which each member incurs liability during each member's period of membership, except:
    a. Where a member has individually retained the risk;
    b. Where the risk is not covered; or
    c. For amounts of claims above the coverage provided by the pool;
(5) For the maintenance of claim reserves equal to known incurred losses and loss adjustment expenses and to an estimate of incurred but not reported losses;
(6) For compliance with any applicable federal requirements regarding financial responsibility for underground storage tanks;

(7) For a final accounting and settlement of the obligations of or refunds to a terminating member to occur when all incurred claims are concluded, settled, or paid;
(8) That the pool may establish offices where necessary in this State and employ necessary staff to carry out the purposes of the pool;
(9) That the pool may retain legal counsel, actuaries, claims adjusters, auditors, engineers, private consultants, and advisors, and other persons as the board of trustees or the administrator deems to be necessary;
(10) That the pool may make and alter bylaws and rules pertaining to the exercise of its purpose and powers;
(11) That the pool may purchase, lease, or rent real and personal property it deems to be necessary; and
(12) That the pool may enter into financial services agreements with financial institutions and that it may issue checks in its own name.

(e) In the event that either the pool or an individual pool member gives notice of an intent to cancel or terminate participation in the pool as provided by subdivision (4) of subsection (d) of this section, the pool shall so notify both the Commissioner and the Secretary within five business days of the issuance or receipt of such notice by the pool. In addition, the pool shall notify both the Commissioner and the Secretary within five business days of the date such cancellation or termination becomes effective, unless notice of cancellation or termination is rescinded.

(f) The formation and operation of an insurance pool under this section shall be subject to approval by the Commissioner who shall, after notice and hearing, establish reasonable requirements and rules for the approval and monitoring of such pools, including prior approval of pool administrators and provisions for periodic examinations of financial condition. The Commissioner may disapprove an application for the formation of an insurance pool, and may suspend or withdraw such approval whenever he finds that such applicant or pool:

(1) Has refused to submit its books, papers, accounts, or affairs to the reasonable inspection of the Commissioner or his representative;
(2) Has refused, or its officers, agents, or administrators have refused, to furnish satisfactory evidence of its financial and business standing or solvency;
(3) Is insolvent, or is in such condition that its further transaction of business in this State is hazardous to its members and creditors in this State and to the public;
(4) Has refused or neglected to pay a valid final judgment against it within 60 days after its rendition;
(5) Has violated any law of this State or has violated or exceeded the powers granted by its members;
(6) Has failed to pay any taxes, fees, or charges imposed in this State within 60 days after they are due and payable, or within 60 days after final disposition or any legal contest with respect to liability therefor; or
(7) Has been found insolvent by a court of any other state, by the insurance regulator or other proper officer or agency of any other state, and has been prohibited from doing business in such state.

(g) Each pool shall be audited annually at the expense of the pool by a certified public accounting firm, with a copy of the report available to the governing body or chief executive officer of each member of the pool and to the Commissioner. The board of trustees of the pool shall obtain an appropriate actuarial evaluation of the loss and loss adjustment expense reserves of the

pool, including an estimate of losses and loss adjustment expenses incurred but not reported. The provisions of G.S. 58-2-131, 58-2-132, 58-2-133, 58-2-134, 58-2-150, 58-2-155, 58-2-165, 58-2-180, 58-2-185, 58-2-190, 58-2-200, and 58-6-5 apply to each pool and to persons that administer the pools. Annual financial statements required by G.S. 58-2-165 shall be filed by each pool within 60 days after the end of the pool's fiscal year. All financial statements required by this section shall be prepared in accordance with generally accepted statutory accounting principles.

(h) If, as a result of the annual audit or an examination by the Commissioner, it appears that the assets of a pool are insufficient to enable the pool to discharge its legal liabilities and other obligations, the Commissioner shall notify the administrator and the board of trustees of the pool of the deficiency and his list of recommendations to abate the deficiency, including a recommendation not to add any new members until the deficiency is abated. If the pool fails to comply with the recommendations within 30 days after the date of the notice, the Commissioner may apply to the Superior Court of Wake County for an order requiring the pool to abate the deficiency and authorizing the Commissioner to appoint one or more special deputy commissioners, counsel, clerks, or assistants to oversee the implementation of the Court's order. The Commissioner has all of the powers granted to him under Article 17A of General Statute Chapter 58 relating to rehabilitation and liquidation of insurers; and the provisions of that Article apply to this section to the extent they are not in conflict with this section. The compensation and expenses of such persons shall be fixed by the Commissioner, subject to the approval of the Court, and shall be paid out of the funds or assets of the pool.

(i) Each pool contract shall provide that the members of the pool shall be assessed on a pro rata basis as calculated by the amount of each member's average annual contribution in order to satisfy the amount of any deficiency where a pool is determined to be insolvent, financially impaired, or is otherwise found to be unable to discharge its legal liabilities and other obligations.

(j) In the event that the Commissioner finds that a pool is insolvent, financially impaired, or otherwise, unable to discharge its legal liabilities or obligations, or if the Commissioner at any time has reason to believe that any owner or operator is unable to demonstrate financial responsibility as required by G.S. 143-215.94H and rules adopted by the Commission as a result of the financial condition of the pool or for any other reason, the Commissioner shall so notify the Secretary.

(k) The provisions of Article 48 of Chapter 58 do not apply to any risks retained by any pool.

(l) The Department of Insurance, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Quality, shall provide guidance and technical assistance for the formation of an insurance pool pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94I to any responsible entity that requests assistance. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, s. 11; 1995, c. 193, s. 66; 1999-132, s. 11.11; 2008-195, s. 10; 2011-266, s. 1.20(c); 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)

§ 143-215.94J. Limitation of liability of the State of North Carolina.

(a) No claim filed against the Commercial Fund shall be paid except from assets of the respective fund as provided for in this Part or as may otherwise be authorized by law.

(b) This Part shall not be construed to obligate the General Assembly to make any appropriation to implement the provisions of this Part; nor shall it be construed to obligate the Secretary to take any action pursuant to this Part for which funds are not available from appropriations or otherwise.

(c) The Secretary may budget anticipated receipts as needed to implement this Part.

(d) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(g), effective December 31, 2016.

(e) If at any time the fund balance is insufficient to pay all valid claims against it, the claims shall be paid in full in the order in which they are finally determined. The Secretary may retain not more than five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) in the Commercial Fund as a contingency reserve and not apply the reserve to the claims. The Department may use the contingency reserve to conduct cleanups in accordance with G.S. 143-215.94G when an imminent hazard poses a threat to human health or to significant natural resources. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, s. 16; 1991, c. 538, s. 9; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; 2015-241, s. 14.16A(g).)

§ 143-215.94K. Enforcement.

The provisions of G.S. 143-215.94W through G.S. 143-215.94Y shall apply to this Part. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; 1995, c. 377, s. 10.)

§ 143-215.94L. Definitions.

(a) The Commission may adopt rules necessary to implement the provisions of this Part. Except as may be otherwise specifically provided, the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes apply to this Part.

(b) This Part shall be administered by the Department consistent with the provisions of Title VI, § 601 of the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments of 1984, Pub. L. No. 98-616, 42 U.S.C. § 6991 et seq., as amended. The provisions of 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 280, Subpart I – Lender Liability (1 July 1997 Edition) apply to this Part and Part 2B of this Article.

(c) The provisions of this Part and of Part 2 of this Article are intended to be complementary. This Part shall not be construed to limit the liability under G.S. 143-215.84(a) of any person or to limit the authority of the Department to take any action pursuant to G.S. 143-215.84(b).

(d) This Part shall be known and may be cited as the Leaking Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Cleanup Act of 1988.

(e) The Department of Environmental Quality shall establish a process to provide informal notice of any proposed policy change or rule interpretation that is not a rule, as defined in G.S. 150B-2, to interested parties. Except in a situation that requires immediate action, the Department shall receive and consider oral and written comment from interested parties before the Department implements the proposed policy change or rule interpretation. Except in a situation that requires immediate action, the Department shall provide written notice of a policy change or rule interpretation to interested parties at least 30 days prior to its implementation. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1991, c. 538, ss. 10, 16; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; 1998-161, s. 9; 2008-195, s. 9; 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)

§ 143-215.94M. Reports.

(a) The Secretary shall present an annual report to the Environmental Review Commission, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, the Fiscal Research Division, the chairs of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Natural, and Economic Resources, and the chairs of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources that shall include at least the following:

(1) A list of all discharges or releases of petroleum from underground storage tanks.

(2) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(h), effective December 31, 2016.
(3) A list of all cleanups undertaken by tank owners or operators and the status of these cleanups.
(4) A statement of receipts and disbursements for the Commercial Fund.
(5) A statement of all claims against the Commercial Fund, including claims paid, claims denied, pending claims, anticipated claims, and any other obligations.
(6) The adequacy of the Commercial Fund to carry out the purposes of this Part together with any recommendations as to measures that may be necessary to assure the continued solvency of the Commercial Fund.
(7) Repealed by Session Laws 2012-200, s. 23, effective August 1, 2012.

(b) The report required by this section shall be made by the Secretary on or before November 1 of each year. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, ss. 12, 16; 1991, c. 538, s. 11; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; c. 402, s. 6; 2002-148, s. 7; 2012-200, s. 23; 2015-241, s. 14.16A(h); 2017-57, s. 14.1(*l*).)

§ 143-215.94N. Applicability.

(a) The provisions of this Part as they relate to costs paid from the Commercial Fund apply only to discharges or releases that are discovered or reported on or after 30 June 1988 from a commercial underground storage tank.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-241, s. 14.16A(d), effective December 31, 2016. (1989, c. 652, ss. 13, 16; 1993, c. 400, s. 15; 1995, c. 377, s. 11; 2015-241, ss. 14.16A(c), (d).)

§ 143-215.94O: Repealed by Session Laws 2011-266, s. 1.20(a), effective July 1, 2011.

§ 143-215.94P. Repealed by Session Laws 2025-25, s. 21(a), effective June 26, 2025.

§§ 143-215.94Q through 143-215.94S. Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 2B. Underground Storage Tank Regulation.

§ 143-215.94T. Adoption and implementation of regulatory program.

(a) The Commission shall adopt, and the Department shall implement and enforce, rules relating to underground storage tanks as provided by G.S. 143-215.3(a)(15) and G.S. 143B-282(a)(2)h. These rules shall include standards and requirements applicable to both existing and new underground storage tanks and tank systems, may include different standards and requirements based on tank capacity, tank location, tank age, and other relevant factors, and shall include, at a minimum, standards and requirements for:

(1) Design, construction, and installation, including monitoring systems.
(2) Notification to the Department, inspection, and registration.
(3) Recordation of tank location.
(4) Modification, retrofitting, and upgrading.
(5) General operating requirements.
(6) Release detection.
(7) Release reporting, investigation, and confirmation.
(8) Corrective action.
(9) Repair.

(10) Closure.
(11) Financial responsibility.
(12) Tank tightness testing procedures and certification of persons who conduct tank tightness tests.
(13) Secondary containment for all components of petroleum underground storage tank systems.

(b) Rules adopted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section that apply only to commercial underground storage tanks shall not apply to any:

(1) Farm or residential underground storage tank of 1,100 gallons or less capacity used for storing motor fuel for noncommercial purposes.
(2) Underground storage tank of 1,100 gallons or less capacity used for storing heating oil for consumptive use on the premises where stored.
(3) Underground storage tank of more than 1,100 gallon capacity used for storing heating oil for consumptive use on the premises where stored by four or fewer households.

(c) Rules adopted pursuant to subdivision (13) of subsection (a) of this section shall require secondary containment for all components of underground storage tank systems, including, but not limited to, tanks, piping, fittings, pump heads, and dispensers. Secondary containment requirements shall include standards for double wall tanks, piping, and fittings and for sump containment for pump heads and dispensers. The rules shall provide for monitoring of double wall interstices and sump containments. The rules shall apply to any underground storage tank system that is installed on or after the date on which the rules become effective and to the replacement of any component of an underground storage tank system on or after that date. This section shall not be construed to limit the right of an owner or operator to repair any existing component of an underground storage tank system. If an existing underground storage tank is replaced, the secondary containment and interstitial monitoring requirements shall apply only to the replaced underground tank. Likewise, if existing piping is replaced, the secondary containment and interstitial monitoring requirements shall apply only to the replaced piping.

(d) The Department shall allow non-tank metallic components that are unprotected from corrosion, including flex connectors and other metal fittings and connectors at the ends of piping runs, to have corrosion protection added as an alternative to replacement of these components if the component does not have visible corrosion and passes a tightness test. (1989, c. 652, s. 14; 1998-161, s. 10; 1999-328, s. 4.12; 2003-352, s. 8; 2008-195, s. 5; 2009-570, s. 20; 2011-394, s. 11.4.)

§ 143-215.94U. Registration of petroleum commercial underground storage tanks; operation of petroleum underground storage tanks; operating permit required.

(a) The owner or operator of each petroleum commercial underground storage tank shall annually obtain an operating permit from the Department for the facility at which the tank is located. The Department shall issue an operating permit only if the owner or operator has done all of the following:

(1) Notified the Department of the existence of all tanks as required by 40 Code of Federal Regulations § 280.22 (1 July 1994 Edition) or 42 U.S.C. § 6991a, if applicable, at the facility.
(2) Paid all fees required under G.S. 143-215.94C for all commercial petroleum underground storage tanks located at the facility.

(3) Complies with applicable release detection, spill and overfill protection, and corrosion protection requirements set out in rules adopted pursuant to this Chapter, notifies the Department of the method or combination of methods of leak detection, spill and overfill protection, and corrosion protection in use, and certifies to the Department that all applicable release detection, spill and overfill protection, and corrosion protection requirements are being met for all petroleum underground storage tanks located at the facility.

(4) If applicable, complies with the Stage I vapor control requirements set out in 15A North Carolina Administrative Code 2D.0928, effective 1 March 1991, notifies the Department of the method or combination of methods of vapor control in use, and certifies to the Department that all Stage I vapor control requirements are being met for all petroleum underground storage tanks located at the facility.

(5) Substantially complied with the air quality, groundwater quality, and underground storage tank standards applicable to any activity in which the applicant has previously engaged and has been in substantial compliance with federal and State laws, regulations, and rules for the protection of the environment. In determining substantial compliance, the compliance history of the owner or operator and any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of the owner, operator, or parent may be considered.

(6) Demonstrated financial responsibility as required by G.S. 143-215.94H.

(b) The operating permit shall be issued at the time the commercial underground storage annual tank operating fee required under G.S. 143-215.94C(a) is paid and shall be valid from the first day of the month in which the fee is due through the last day of the last month for which the fee is paid in accordance with the schedule established by the Department under G.S. 143-215.94C(b).

(c) No person shall place a petroleum product, and no owner or operator shall cause a petroleum product to be placed, into an underground storage tank at a facility for which the owner or operator does not hold a currently valid operating permit.

(d) The Department shall issue an operating permit certificate for each facility that meets the requirements of subsection (a) of this section. The operating permit certificate shall identify the number of tanks at the facility and shall conspicuously display the date on which the permit expires. Except for the owner or operator, no person shall be liable under subsection (c) of this section if an unexpired operating permit certificate is displayed at the facility, unless the person knows or has reason to know that the owner or operator does not hold a currently valid operating permit for the facility.

(e) The Department may revoke an operating permit only if the owner or operator fails to continuously meet the requirements set out in subsection (a) of this section. If the Department revokes an operating permit, the owner or operator of the facility for which the operating permit was issued shall immediately surrender the operating permit certificate to the Department, unless the revocation is stayed pursuant to G.S. 150B-33. An owner or operator may challenge a decision by the Department to deny or revoke an operating permit by filing a contested case under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. (1995, c. 377, s. 2; 1998-161, s. 6; 2008-195, s. 6; 2011-398, s. 52.)

§ 143-215.94V. Standards for petroleum underground storage tank cleanup.

(a) Legislative findings and intent.

(1) The General Assembly finds that:
   a. The goals of the underground storage tank program are to protect human health and the environment. Maintaining the solvency of the Commercial Fund is essential to these goals.
   b. The sites at which discharges or releases from underground storage tanks occur vary greatly in terms of complexity, soil types, hydrogeology, other physical and chemical characteristics, current and potential future uses of groundwater, and the degree of risk that each site may pose to human health and the environment.
   c. Risk-based corrective action is a process that recognizes this diversity and utilizes an approach where assessment and remediation activities are specifically tailored to the conditions and risks of a specific site.
   d. Risk-based corrective action gives the State flexibility in requiring different levels of cleanup based on scientific analysis of different site characteristics, and allowing no action or no further action at sites that pose little risk to human health or the environment.
   e. A risk-based approach to the cleanup of environmental damage can adequately protect human health and the environment while preventing excessive or unproductive cleanup efforts, thereby assuring that limited resources are directed toward those sites that pose the greatest risk to human health and the environment.

(2) The General Assembly intends:
   a. To direct the Commission to adopt rules that will provide for risk-based assessment and cleanup of discharges and releases from petroleum underground storage tanks. These rules are intended to combine groundwater standards that protect current and potential future uses of groundwater with risk-based analysis to determine the appropriate cleanup levels and actions.
   b. That these rules apply to all discharges or releases that are reported on or after the date the rules become effective in order to ascertain whether cleanup is necessary, and if so, the appropriate level of cleanup.
   c. That these rules may be applied to any discharge or release that has been reported at the time the rules become effective at the discretion of the Commission.
   d. That these rules and decisions of the Commission and the Department in implementing these rules facilitate the completion of more cleanups in a shorter period of time.
   e. That the Commercial Fund not be used to clean up sites where the Commission has determined that a discharge or release poses a degree of risk to human health or the environment that is no greater than the acceptable level of risk established by the Commission.
   f. Repealed by Session Laws 1998-161, s. 11(c), effective retroactively to January 1, 1998.
   g. That the Commercial Fund be used to perform the most cost-effective cleanup that addresses imminent threats to human health and the environment.

(b) The Commission shall adopt rules to establish a risk-based approach for the assessment, prioritization, and cleanup of discharges and releases from petroleum underground storage tanks. The rules shall address, at a minimum, the circumstances where site-specific information should be considered, criteria for determining acceptable cleanup levels, and the acceptable level or range of levels of risk to human health and the environment. Rules that use the distance between a source area of a confirmed discharge or release to a water supply well or a private drinking water well, as those terms are defined under G.S. 87-85, shall include a determination whether a nearby well is likely to be affected by the discharge or release as a factor in determining levels of risk.

(c) The Commission may require an owner or operator or a landowner eligible for payment or reimbursement under subsections (b) and (b1) of G.S. 143-215.94E to provide information necessary to determine the degree of risk to human health and the environment that is posed by a discharge or release from a petroleum underground storage and to identify the most cost-effective cleanup that addresses imminent threats to human health and the environment.

(d) If the Commission concludes that a discharge or release poses a degree of risk to human health or the environment that is no greater than the acceptable level of risk established by the Commission, the Commission shall notify an owner, operator, or landowner who provides the information required by subsection (c) of this section that no cleanup, further cleanup, or further action will be required unless the Commission later determines that the discharge or release poses an unacceptable level of risk or a potentially unacceptable level of risk to human health or the environment. If the Commission concludes that a discharge or release poses a degree of risk to human health or the environment that requires further cleanup, the Commission shall notify the owner, operator, or landowner who provides the information required by subsection (c) of this section of the cleanup method approved by the Commission as the most cost-effective cleanup method for the site. This section shall not be construed to prohibit an owner, operator, or landowner from selecting a cleanup method other than the cost-effective cleanup method approved by the Commission so long as the Commission determines that the alternative cleanup method will address imminent threats to human health and the environment.

(e) If the Commission concludes under subsection (d) of this section that no cleanup, no further cleanup, or no further action will be required, the Department shall not pay or reimburse any costs otherwise payable or reimbursable under this Article from the Commercial Fund, other than reasonable and necessary to conduct the risk assessment required by this section, unless:

(1) Cleanup is ordered or damages are awarded in a finally adjudicated judgment in an action against the owner or landowner. To be eligible for reimbursement of damages arising from a third-party claim for bodily injury or property damage awarded in a finally adjudicated judgment, however, an owner or operator shall (i) notify the Department of any such claim; (ii) provide the Department with all pleadings and other related documents if a lawsuit has been filed; and (iii) provide the Department copies of any medical reports, statements, investigative reports, or certifications from licensed professionals necessary to determine that a claim for bodily injury or property damage is reasonable and necessary. Reimbursement of claims for damages arising from a third-party claim for bodily injury or property damage awarded in a finally adjudicated judgment shall be subject to the limitations set forth in G.S. 143-215.94B(b)(5) and any other provision governing third-party claims set forth in this Article.

(2) Cleanup is required or damages are agreed to in a consent judgment approved by the Department prior to its entry by the court.
(3) Cleanup is required or damages are agreed to in a settlement agreement approved by the Department prior to its execution by the parties.
(4) The payment or reimbursement is for costs that were incurred prior to or as a result of notification of a determination by the Commission that no cleanup, no further cleanup, or no action is required.
(5) The payment or reimbursement is for costs that were incurred as a result of a later determination by the Commission that the discharge or release poses a threat or potential threat to human health or the environment as provided in subsection (d) of this section.

(e1) If the Commission concludes under subsection (d) of this section that further cleanup is required and notifies the owner, operator, or landowner of the cleanup method approved by the Commission as the most cost-effective cleanup method for the site, the Department shall not pay or reimburse any costs otherwise payable or reimbursable under this Article from the Commercial Fund, other than those costs that are reasonable and necessary to conduct the risk assessment and to implement the cost-effective cleanup method approved by the Commission. If the owner, operator, or landowner selects a cleanup method other than the one identified by the Commission as the most cost-effective cleanup, the Department shall not pay or reimburse for costs in excess of the cost of implementing the approved cost-effective cleanup.

(f) This section shall not be construed to limit the authority of the Commission to require investigation, initial response, and abatement of a discharge or release pending a determination by the Commission under subsection (d) of this section as to whether cleanup, further cleanup, or further action will be required.

(g) Subsections (c) through (e1) of this section apply only to assessments and cleanups in progress or begun on or after 2 January 1998.

(h) If a discharge or release of petroleum from an underground storage tank results in contamination in soil or groundwater that becomes commingled with contamination that is the result of a discharge or release of petroleum from a source of contamination other than an underground storage tank, the cleanup of petroleum may proceed under rules adopted pursuant to this section. The Department shall not pay or reimburse from the Commercial Fund any costs associated with the assessment or remediation of that portion of contamination that results from a release or discharge of petroleum from a source other than an underground storage tank. (1995, c. 377, s. 1; 1998-161, s. 11(c); 2003-352, s. 9; 2011-394, s. 11.5; 2015-263, s. 20(a); 2025-25, s. 21(e).)

§ 143-215.94W. Enforcement procedures: civil penalties.

(a) A civil penalty of not more than ten thousand dollars ($10,000) may be assessed by the Secretary against any person who:
(1) Violates any provision of this Part or rule adopted pursuant to this Part.
(2) Fails to apply for or to secure a permit required by this Part.
(3) Violates or fails to act in accordance with the terms, conditions, or requirements of any permit issued pursuant to this Part.
(4) Fails to file, submit, or make available, as the case may be, any documents, data, or reports required by this Part.

(5) Violates or fails to act in accordance with the terms, conditions, or requirements of any special order or other appropriate document issued pursuant to G.S. 143-215.2 or fails to comply with the requirements of G.S. 143B-279.9 through G.S. 143B-279.11.

(6) Falsifies or tampers with any recording or monitoring device or method required to be operated or maintained under this Part or rules implementing this Part.

(7) Knowingly renders inaccurate any recording or monitoring device or method required to be operated or maintained under this Part or rules implementing this Part.

(8) Knowingly makes any false statement, representation, or certification in any application, record, report, plan, or other document filed or required to be maintained under this Part or a rule implementing this Part.

(9) Knowingly makes a false statement of a material fact in a rulemaking proceeding or contested case under this Part.

(10) Refuses access to the Commission or its duly designated representative to any premises for the purpose of conducting a lawful inspection provided for in this Part.

(b) If any action or failure to act for which a penalty may be assessed under this section is continuous, the Secretary may assess a penalty not to exceed ten thousand dollars ($10,000) per day for so long as the violation continues. A penalty for a continuous violation shall not exceed two hundred thousand dollars ($200,000) for each period of 30 days during which the violation continues.

(c) In determining the amount of the penalty, the Secretary shall consider the factors set out in G.S. 143B-282.1(b). The procedures set out in G.S. 143B-282.1 shall apply to civil penalty assessments that are presented to the Commission for final agency decision.

(d) The Secretary shall notify any person assessed a civil penalty of the assessment and the specific reasons therefor by registered or certified mail, or by any means authorized by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4. Contested case petitions shall be filed pursuant to G.S. 150B-23 within 30 days of receipt of the notice of assessment. The Secretary shall make the final decision regarding assessment of a civil penalty under this section.

(e) Requests for remission of civil penalties shall be filed with the Secretary. Remission requests shall not be considered unless made within 30 days of receipt of the notice of assessment. Remission requests must be accompanied by a waiver of the right to a contested case hearing pursuant to Chapter 150B and a stipulation of the facts on which the assessment was based. Consistent with the limitations in G.S. 143B-282.1(c) and (d), remission requests may be resolved by the Secretary and the violator. If the Secretary and the violator are unable to resolve the request, the Secretary shall deliver remission requests and his recommended action to the Committee on Civil Penalty Remissions of the Environmental Management Commission appointed pursuant to G.S. 143B-282.1(c).

(f) If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after notice of assessment has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the superior court of any county in which the violator resides or has his or its principal place of business to recover the amount of the assessment, unless the violator contests the assessment as provided in subsection (d) of this section, or requests remission of the assessment in whole or in part as provided in subsection (e) of this section. If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30

days after the final agency decision or court order has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the superior court of any county in which the violator resides or has his or its principal place of business to recover the amount of the assessment. Such civil actions must be filed within three years of the date the final agency decision or court order was served on the violator.

(g) Repealed by Session Laws 1995 (Regular Session, 1996), c. 743, s. 17.

(h) The clear proceeds of civil penalties assessed pursuant to this section shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. (1995, c. 377, s. 3; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 743, s. 17; 1998-215, s. 69; 2002-90, s. 6; 2025-25, s. 29(6).)

§ 143-215.94X. Enforcement procedures: criminal penalties.

(a) Any person who negligently commits any of the offenses set out in subdivisions (1) through (9) of G.S. 143-215.94W(a) shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor which may include a fine not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000) per day of violation, provided that such fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of two hundred thousand dollars ($200,000) for each period of 30 days during which a violation continues.

(b) Any person who knowingly and willfully commits any of the offenses set out in subdivisions (1) through (5) of G.S. 143-215.94W(a) shall be guilty of a Class I felony, which may include a fine not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) per day of violation, provided that this fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) for each period of 30 days during which a violation continues. For the purposes of this subsection, the phrase "knowingly and willfully" shall mean intentionally and consciously as the courts of this State, according to the principles of common law interpret the phrase in the light of reason and experience.

(c) (1) Any person who knowingly commits any of the offenses set out in subdivisions (1) through (5) of G.S. 143-215.94W(a) and who knows at that time that he thereby places another person in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury shall be guilty of a Class C felony, which may include a fine not to exceed two hundred fifty thousand dollars ($250,000) per day of violation, provided that this fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of one million dollars ($1,000,000) for each period of 30 days during which a violation continues.

(2) For the purposes of this subsection, a person's state of mind is knowing with respect to:

a. His conduct, if he is aware of the nature of his conduct;

b. An existing circumstance, if he is aware or believes that the circumstance exists; or

c. A result of his conduct, if he is aware or believes that his conduct is substantially certain to cause danger of death or serious bodily injury.

(3) Under this subsection, in determining whether a defendant who is a natural person knew that his conduct placed another person in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury:

a. The person is responsible only for actual awareness or actual belief that he possessed; and

b. Knowledge possessed by a person other than the defendant but not by the defendant himself may not be attributed to the defendant.

(4) It is an affirmative defense to a prosecution under this subsection that the conduct charged was conduct consented to by the person endangered and that the danger and conduct charged were reasonably foreseeable hazards of an occupation, a business, or a profession; or of medical treatment or medical or scientific experimentation conducted by professionally approved methods and such other person had been made aware of the risks involved prior to giving consent. The defendant may establish an affirmative defense under this subdivision by a preponderance of the evidence.

(d) No proceeding shall be brought or continued under this section for or on account of a violation by any person who has previously been convicted of a federal violation based upon the same set of facts.

(e) In proving the defendant's possession of actual knowledge, circumstantial evidence may be used, including evidence that the defendant took affirmative steps to shield himself from relevant information. Consistent with the principles of common law, the subjective mental state of defendants may be inferred from their conduct.

(f) For the purposes of the felony provisions of this section, a person's state of mind shall not be found "knowingly and willfully" or "knowingly" if the conduct that is the subject of the prosecution is the result of any of the following occurrences or circumstances:

(1) A natural disaster or other act of God which could not have been prevented or avoided by the exercise of due care or foresight.

(2) An act of third parties other than agents, employees, contractors, or subcontractors of the defendant.

(3) An act done in reliance on the written advice or emergency on-site direction of an employee of the Department. In emergencies, oral advice may be relied upon if written confirmation is delivered to the employee as soon as practicable after receiving and relying on the advice.

(4) An act causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to the public health, safety, or welfare and done in compliance with other conflicting environmental requirements or other constraints imposed in writing by environmental agencies or officials after written notice is delivered to all relevant agencies that the conflict exists and will cause a violation of the identified standard.

(5) Violations causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to the public health, safety, or welfare for which no enforcement action or civil penalty could have been imposed under any written civil enforcement guidelines in use by the Department at the time. This subdivision shall not be construed to require the Department to develop or use written civil enforcement guidelines.

(6) Occasional, inadvertent, short-term violations causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to the public health, safety, or welfare. If the violation occurs within 30 days of a prior violation or lasts for more than 24 hours, it is not an occasional, short-term violation.

(g) All general defenses, affirmative defenses, and bars to prosecution that may apply with respect to other criminal offenses under State criminal offenses may apply to prosecutions brought under this section or other criminal statutes that refer to this section and shall be determined by the courts of this State according to the principles of common law as they may be applied in the light of

reason and experience. Concepts of justification and excuse applicable under this section may be developed in the light of reason and experience. (1995, c. 377, s. 3.)

§ 143-215.94Y. Enforcement procedures; injunctive relief.

Whenever the Department has reasonable cause to believe that any person has violated or is threatening to violate any of the provisions of this Part, any of the terms of any permit issued pursuant to this Part, or a rule implementing this Part or has failed to comply with the requirements of G.S. 143B-279.9 through G.S. 143B-279.11, the Department may, either before or after the institution of any other action or proceeding authorized by this Part, request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the name of the State upon the relation of the Department for injunctive relief to restrain the violation or threatened violation and for such other and further relief in the premises as the court shall deem proper. The Attorney General may institute such action in the superior court of the county in which the violation occurred or may occur or, in his discretion, in the superior court of the county in which the person responsible for the violation or threatened violation resides or has his or its principal place of business. Upon a determination by the court that the alleged violation of the provisions of this Part, the rules of the Commission, or the failure to comply with the requirements of G.S. 143B-279.9 through G.S. 143B-279.11 has occurred or is threatened, the court shall grant the relief necessary to prevent or abate the violation or threatened violation. Neither the institution of the action nor any of the proceedings thereon shall relieve any party to such proceedings from any penalty prescribed for violation of this Part or for failure to comply with the requirements of G.S. 143B-279.9 through G.S. 143B-279.11. (1995, c. 377, s. 3; 2002-90, s. 7.)

§ 143-215.94Z: Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 2C. Offshore Oil and Gas Activities. Adverse Environmental Impact Protection.

§ 143-215.94AA. Declaration of public policy.

The General Assembly hereby finds and declares as follows:

(1) The traditional uses of the seacoast of the State are public and private recreation, commercial and sports fishing, and habitat for natural resources;

(2) The preservation of these uses is a matter of the highest urgency and priority, and such uses can only be preserved effectively by maintaining and enhancing the existing condition of the coastal waters, estuaries, wetlands, tidal flats, beaches, and public lands adjoining the seacoast;

(3) The coastal economy, including access to the coast of the State, depends, either directly or indirectly, upon a ready and continuous reserve of petroleum products and by-products, including that portion of the supply resulting from oil and gas activities on the Outer Continental Shelf;

(4) Offshore oil and natural gas exploration, production, processing, recovery, and transportation pose increased potential for damage to the State's coastal environment, to the traditional uses of the area, and to the beauty of the North Carolina coast;

(5) Spills, discharges, and escapes of pollutants occurring as a result of procedures involving offshore oil and natural gas related activities have occurred in the past, and future threats of potentially catastrophic proportions from such activities require adoption of this Part as mitigation against such events;

(6) The economic burdens imposed by the General Assembly upon those engaged in the offshore exploration, production, processing, recovery, and transportation of oil and natural gas are reasonable and necessary in light of the traditional uses and interests herein protected, which are expressly declared to be of grave public interest and concern to the State in promoting its general interest and welfare promoting the public health, preventing diseases, and providing for the public safety. (1989, c. 656, s. 5, c. 770, s. 75.5.)

§ 143-215.94BB. Definitions.

In addition to the definitions set out in G.S. 143-215.77, the following definitions shall apply to this Part:

(1) "Damages" are damages for any of the following:
   a. Injury or harm to real or personal property, which includes the cost of restoring, repairing, or replacing any real or personal property damaged or destroyed by a discharge under this section, any income lost from the time such property is damaged to the time such property is restored, repaired, or replaced, and any reduction in value of such property caused by such discharge by comparison with its value prior thereto.
   b. Business loss, including loss of income or impairment of earning capacity due to damage to real or personal property or to damage or destruction of natural resources upon which such income or earning capacity is reasonably dependent.
   c. Interest on loans obtained or other financial obligations incurred by an injured party for the purpose of ameliorating the adverse effects of a discharge pending the payment of a claim in full as provided by this Article.
   d. Costs of cleanup, removal, or treatment of natural gas, oil, or drilling waste discharges.
   e. Costs of restoration, rehabilitation, and, where possible, replacement of wildlife or other natural resources damaged as a result of a discharge.
   f. When the injured party is the State or one of its political subdivisions, in addition to any injury described in subparagraphs (a) to (e), inclusive, damages include all of the following:
      1. Injury to natural resources or wildlife, including recreational or commercial fisheries, and loss of use and enjoyment of public beaches and other public resources or facilities within the jurisdiction of the State or one of its political subdivisions.
      2. Costs to assess damages to natural resources, wildlife, or habitat.
      3. Costs incurred to monitor the cleanup of the natural gas, oil, or drilling waste spilled.
      4. Loss of State or local government tax revenues resulting from damages to real or personal property proximately resulting from a discharge.

(2) For the purposes of this Part, "oil" and "drilling wastes" include, but are not limited to: petroleum, refined or processed petroleum, petroleum by-products, oil sludge, oil refuse, oil mixed with wastes and chemicals, or other materials

used in the exploration, recovery, or processing of oil. "Oil" does not include oil carried in a vessel for use as fuel in that vessel.

(3) "Natural gas" includes natural gas, liquified natural gas, and natural gas by-products. "Natural gas" does not include natural gas carried in a vessel for use as fuel in that vessel.

(4) "Exploration" means undersea boring, drilling, soil sampling, and any other technique employed to assess and evaluate the presence of subterranean oil and natural gas deposits.

(5) "Injured party" means any person who suffers damages from natural gas, oil, or drilling waste which is discharged or leaks into marine waters, or from offshore exploration. The State, or a county or municipality, may be an injured party.

(6) "Responsible person" means any of the following:

a. The owner or transporter of natural gas, oil, or drilling waste which causes an injury covered by this Part.

b. The owner, operator, lessee of, or person who charters by demise, any offshore well, undersea site, facility, oil rig, oil platform, vessel, or pipeline which is the source of natural gas, oil, drilling waste, or is the source or location of exploration which causes an injury covered by this Part.

"Responsible party" does not include the United States, the State, any county, municipality or public governmental agency; however, this exception to the definition of "responsible person" shall not be read to exempt utilities from the provisions of this Part.

(7) "Offshore waters" shall include both the territorial sea extending seaward from the coastline of North Carolina or any other coastal state bordering the Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico, and the exclusive economic zone extending seaward from the territorial sea of each such state.

(8) "Natural resources" shall include "marine and estuarine resources" and "wildlife resources" as those terms are defined in G.S. 113-129(11) and G.S. 113-129(17), respectively.

(9) "Coastal fishing waters" has the same meaning as in G.S. 113-129.

(10) "Exclusive economic zone" has the same meaning as in section 1001(8) of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, 33 U.S.C. § 2701(8). (1989, c. 656, s. 5; c. 770, s. 75.5; 2010-179, s. 1(b).)

§ 143-215.94CC. Liability under this section; exceptions.

(a) Any responsible person shall be strictly liable, notwithstanding any language of limitation found in G.S. 143-215.89, for all cleanup and removal costs and all direct or indirect damages incurred within the territorial jurisdiction of the State by any injured party that arise out of, or are caused by any of the following:

(1) The discharge, as defined in G.S. 143-215.77, of natural gas, oil, or drilling waste into or onto coastal fishing waters or offshore waters, from any of the following sources wherever located:

a. Any well or undersea site at which there is exploration for or extraction or recovery of natural gas or oil.

b. Any facility, oil rig, or oil platform at which there is exploration for, or extraction, recovery, processing, or storage of, natural gas or oil.
c. Any vessel in which natural gas, oil, or drilling waste is transported, processed or stored other than for purposes of fuel for the vessel carrying it.
d. Any pipeline in which natural gas, oil, or drilling waste is transported.

(2) Any exploration in or upon coastal fishing waters.

(3) Any technique or method used for cleanup and removal of any discharge of natural gas, oil, or drilling waste from any source listed in subdivision (1) of this subsection into or onto coastal fishing waters, including, but not limited to, chemical dispersants.

(b) A responsible person is not liable to an injured party under this section for any of the following:

(1) Damages, other than costs of removal incurred by the State or a local government, caused solely by any act of war, hostilities, civil war, or insurrection or by an unanticipated grave natural disaster or other act of God of an exceptional, inevitable, and irresistible character, which could not have been prevented or avoided by the exercise of due care or foresight.

(2) Damages caused solely by the negligence or intentional malfeasance of that injured party.

(3) Damages caused solely by the criminal act of a third party other than the defendant or an agent or employee of the defendant. In any action arising under the provisions of this Article wherein this exception is raised as a defense to liability, the burden of proving that the alleged third-party intervention occurred in such a manner as to limit the liability of the person sought to be held liable shall be upon the person charged.

(4) Natural seepage not caused by a responsible person.

(5) Discharge of oil or natural gas from a private pleasure boat or commercial fishing vessel having a fuel capacity of less than 500 gallons.

(6) Damages which arise out of, or are caused by, a discharge that is authorized by and in compliance with a State or federal permit.

(7) Damages that could have been reasonably mitigated by the injured party in accordance with common law.

(c) A court of suitable jurisdiction in any action under this Part may award reasonable costs of the suit and attorneys' fees, and the costs of any necessary expert witnesses, to any prevailing plaintiff. The court may award reasonable costs of the suit and attorneys' fees to any prevailing defendant only if the court finds that the plaintiff commenced or prosecuted the suit under this Part in bad faith or solely for purposes of harassing the defendant. (1989, c. 656, s. 5; c. 770, ss. 75.4, 75.5; 2010-179, s. 1(c).)

§ 143-215.94DD. Joint and several liability; damages; personal injury.

(a) Liability under this Part shall be joint and several. However, this section does not bar a cause of action that a responsible person has or would have, by reason of subrogation or otherwise, against any person.

(b) This section does not prohibit any person from bringing an action for damages caused by natural gas, oil or drilling waste, or by exploration, under any other provisions or principle of

law, including, but not limited to, common law. However, damages shall not be awarded pursuant to this section to an injured party for any loss or injury for which the party is or has been awarded damages under any other provisions or principles of law. G.S. 143-215.94CC(b) does not create any defense not otherwise available regarding any action brought under any other provision or principle of law, including, but not limited to, common law.

(c) This section shall not apply to claims for damages for personal injury or wrongful death, and does not limit the right of any person to bring such an action under any provision or theory of law. (1989, c. 656, s. 5, c. 770, s. 75.5.)

§ 143-215.94EE. Removal of prohibited discharges.

(a) The Department shall be authorized and empowered to proceed with the cleanup of discharges covered under this Part pursuant to the authority granted to the Department in G.S. 143-215.84(b) and G.S. 143-215.94HH(b)(2).

(b) Any unexplained discharge of oil, natural gas or drilling wastes occurring in waters beyond the jurisdiction of the State that for any reason penetrates within State jurisdiction shall be removed by or under the direction of the Department. Except for any expenses incurred by the responsible person, should such person become known, all expenses incurred in the removal of such discharges shall be paid promptly by the State from the Oil or Other Hazardous Substances Pollution Protection Fund established pursuant to G.S. 143-215.87 or from any other available sources. In the case of unexplained discharges, the matter shall be referred by the Secretary to the North Carolina Attorney General for collection of damages pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94FF of this Part. At his discretion, the Attorney General may refer the matter to the State Bureau of Investigation or other appropriate State or federal authority to determine the identity of the responsible person.

(c) Nothing in this section is intended to preclude cleanup and removal by any person threatened by such discharges, who, as soon as is reasonably possible, coordinates and obtains approval for such actions with ongoing State or federal operations and appropriate State and federal authorities.

(d) No action taken by any person to contain or remove an unlawful discharge shall be construed as an admission of liability for said discharge. (1989, c. 656, s. 5, c. 770, s. 75.5; 1991, c. 342, s. 13.)

§ 143-215.94FF. Authorization of the Attorney General; citizens' suits.

(a) For any violation of this Part, the Attorney General may, on behalf of the State and on behalf of affected citizens of the State as a class, bring a civil action in the Superior Court of Wake County against the alleged responsible person. The action may seek:

(1) Injunctive relief; or
(2) Damages caused by the violation; or
(3) Both damages and injunctive relief; or
(4) Such other and further relief in the premises as the Court shall deem proper.

(b) Any injured party under this Part may bring a civil action for damages against the alleged responsible person. Civil actions under this subsection shall be brought in the superior court of the county in which the alleged injury occurred or in which the alleged damaged property is located, or in the county in which the injured party resided.

(c) Nothing in this section shall restrict any right which any person (or class of persons) may have under any statute or common law to seek injunctive or other relief. (1989, c. 656, s. 5, c. 770, s. 75.5.)

§ 143-215.94GG. Notification by persons responsible for discharge.

(a) Any person responsible for an offshore discharge under this Part shall immediately notify the Division of Emergency Management pursuant to rules established by the Secretary of Public Safety, if any, but in no case later than two hours after the discharge. Failure to so notify the Division of Emergency Management shall make the responsible person liable to the penalties set out in subsection (b) of this section. No penalty shall be imposed under this section when the owner or operator has promptly reported the discharge to federal authorities designated pursuant to 33 U.S.C. § 1321.

(b) The civil penalty for failure to immediately report a discharge under this Part shall be determined by the Commission. In determining the amount of a penalty for failure to report under this section, the Commission shall take into consideration such circumstances as the gravity of the violation, the previous record of the responsible person in complying with the terms of this Article, whether the violator reported the discharge and if so after what period of time following the spill, the size of the business of the responsible person and the effect of the penalty on the violator's ability to continue in business, and other relevant factors; provided that the penalty assessed under this section shall not exceed the following daily maximum amounts, based upon the quantity of oil spilled:

(1) Up to 50,000 gallons..... $ 50,000
(2) More than 50,000 gallons..... 250,000

For purposes of this section, each day or any part thereof during which a discharge goes unreported by the responsible person shall constitute a separate offense.

(c) The clear proceeds of penalties provided for in this section shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. (1989, c. 656, s. 5; c. 770, s. 75.5; 1998-215, s. 70; 2011-145, s. 19.1(g).)

§ 143-215.94HH. Oil spill contingency plan.

(a) The State Emergency Response Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of Administration or his designee in the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Office, shall develop a State oil spill contingency plan relating solely to the undersea exploration, extraction, production and transport of oil or natural gas in the marine environment off the North Carolina coast, including any such development on the Outer Continental Shelf seaward of the State's jurisdiction over its territorial waters.

(b) The Secretary of Public Safety or his designee shall establish, pursuant to such a plan, an emergency oil spill control network which shall be comprised of available equipment from appropriate State, county and municipal governmental agencies. Such network shall be employed to provide an immediate response to an oil discharge into the offshore marine environment which is reasonably likely to affect the State's coastal waters. Furthermore, such network shall be employed in conjunction with the cleanup operations under this Article or any applicable federal law, required of the owner or operator of the discharging operation, vessel, or facility, the Department of Environmental Quality, and any federal agency.

(1) The Secretary of Public Safety or his designee shall make an inventory, including its location and condition, of all equipment owned by the State, its

counties and municipalities, and private equipment that is available to the State for leasing in the case of an oil spill including costs of leasing, that would be capable of participating in discharge cleanup operations.

(2) The Secretary of Public Safety shall at his discretion have the power to deploy such equipment in participating in a discharge cleanup operation.

(3) The Secretary of Environmental Quality shall be authorized to reimburse such State agencies, counties, and municipalities for use of such equipment with such funds as may be available from the "Oil or Other Hazardous Substances Pollution Protection Fund" created pursuant to G.S. 143-215.87 or any other sources.

(4) The oil spill contingency plan and oil spill response network developed pursuant to this section shall be reviewed and evaluated for adequacy and continued feasibility every three years, or more often if deemed appropriate by the Secretary of Public Safety. (1989, c. 656, s. 5; c. 727, s. 218(111a); c. 770, s. 75.5; 1997-443, s. 11A.119(a); 2011-145, s. 19.1(g); 2015-241, ss. 14.30(u), (v).)

§ 143-215.94II. Emergency proclamation; Governor's powers.

(a) Whenever any emergency exists or appears imminent, arising from the discharge of oil or other pollutants within the marine environment, the Governor shall by proclamation declare a state of emergency in the appropriate sections of the State. Upon such proclamation, the Governor shall have all powers enumerated in G.S. 166A-19.30(c) subject to the limitations contained in that subsection.

(b) If the Governor is unavailable, the Lieutenant Governor shall, by proclamation, declare a state of emergency in the appropriate sections of the State.

(c) In performing his duties under this section, the Governor is authorized and directed to cooperate with all departments and agencies of the federal government, the offices and agencies of other states and foreign countries and the political subdivisions thereof, and private agencies in all matters pertaining to an emergency described herein.

(d) In addition to the powers enumerated in G.S. 166A-19.30(c), in the case of such an emergency described in subsection (a) of this section, the Governor is further authorized and empowered to transfer any funds available to him by statute for emergency use into the Oil or Other Hazardous Substances Pollution Protection Fund created pursuant to G.S. 143-215.87, to be utilized for the purposes specified therein. (1989, c. 656, s. 5; c. 770, s. 75.5; 1991, c. 342, s. 14; 2012-12, s. 2(ww).)

§ 143-215.94JJ. Federal law.

Nothing in this Part shall authorize State agencies to impose any duties or obligations in conflict with limitations on State authority established by federal law at the time such agency action is taken. Likewise, no additional liability is established by this Part to the extent that, at the time of the injury, federal law establishes limits on liability which preempt State law. The federal limits on liability established in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, 33 U.S.C.A. §§ 2701 to 2762, shall not apply to discharges or pollution by oil within the territorial jurisdiction of the State. (1989, c. 656, s. 5; c. 770, s. 75.5; 2010-179, s. 1(d).)

§ 143-215.94KK: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 143-215.94LL: Reserved for future codification purposes.

§ 143-215.94MM: Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 2D. Training of Underground Storage Tank Operators.

§ 143-215.94NN. Applicability.

The requirements of this Part apply to underground storage tank systems regulated under Subtitle I of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, Pub. L. 94-580, 90 Stat. 2795, 42 U.S.C. § 6901, et seq., as amended, except those excluded by regulation at 40 Code of Federal Regulations 280.10(b) (July 1, 2009 Edition) and those deferred by regulation at 40 Code of Federal Regulations 280.10(c) (July 1, 2009 Edition). (2010-154, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.94OO. Definitions.

Unless a different meaning is required by the context, the definitions in G.S. 143-212 and G.S. 143-215.94A apply in this Part.

(1) "Emergency response operator" means an on-site person whose responsibilities include addressing emergencies presented by a spill or release, or responding to alarms or releases from an underground storage tank system. For an unmanned facility, "emergency response operator" means the person responsible for responding to emergencies or alarms or releases at the facility.

(2) "Primary operator" means a person having primary responsibility for the daily on-site operation and maintenance of an underground storage tank system.

(3) "Underground storage tank" means: (i) any one or combination of tanks (including underground pipes connected thereto) that is used to contain an accumulation of regulated substances, and the volume of which (including the volume of the underground pipes connected thereto) is ten percent (10%) or more beneath the surface of the ground; and (ii) to which this Part applies pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94NN.

(4) "Underground storage tank system" or "tank system" means an underground storage tank, connected underground piping, underground ancillary equipment, dispenser, and containment system, if any. (2010-154, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.94PP. Designation of operators to be trained.

(a) The owner of an underground storage tank system shall designate the primary operator of the underground storage tank system. The person designated shall be the underground storage tank operator, as defined in 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 280 (July 1, 2009 Edition), or an employee or agent of the underground storage tank operator. There shall be a designated primary operator of the underground storage tank system at all times, until the underground storage tank system has been permanently closed. If the owner fails to designate a primary operator, the owner shall be deemed to be the primary operator of the underground storage tank system for purposes of this Part.

(b) The primary operator shall designate one or more emergency response operators who are employees or agents of the primary operator and shall be on call to respond to emergencies or alarms at the facility. If an emergency response operator is not present at the facility at all times during which a regulated substance is being withdrawn from, or is capable of being withdrawn

from, the underground storage tank system, the facility shall have an automated notification system in place that will alert the emergency response operator of an emergency or activated alarm at the facility. If the primary operator fails to designate one or more emergency response operators, the primary operator shall be deemed to be the emergency response operator of the underground storage tank system.

(c) A person may act as both the primary operator and the emergency response operator of the underground storage tank system. (2010-154, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.94QQ. Training requirements for primary operators.

(a) The Department shall develop and implement a training program for primary operators. The training program shall provide instruction on the proper operation and maintenance of the underground storage tank system at the facility, principles of construction and safety, and all regulatory requirements associated with the underground storage tank system. The training may consist of a combination of on-site instruction and on-site testing, as well as online instruction and online testing. In order to satisfactorily complete the training, a primary operator shall, at a minimum, demonstrate all of the following:

(1) Knowledge of the requirements for spill prevention, overfill prevention, release detection, corrosion protection, emergency response, and product compatibility.

(2) Site-specific knowledge of the equipment used at the facility and the components of the underground storage tank system, and the methods of release detection and release prevention associated with the underground storage tank components.

(3) Knowledge of the requirements for demonstrating financial responsibility.

(4) Understanding of notification requirements associated with the underground storage tank system, including requirements for reporting releases and suspected releases.

(5) Understanding of the requirements for the temporary and permanent closure of underground storage tank systems.

(6) Knowledge of the emergency response operator training requirements, and the actions to be taken in response to emergencies and alarms.

(b) A primary operator shall be retrained if an inspection at the facility reveals that the underground storage tank system is not in substantial compliance with the requirements for: release detection, release prevention, financial responsibility, emergency response, suspected release reporting and investigation, the proximity of the underground storage tank system to water supply wells and surface water, and permitting. A primary operator who is required to be retrained shall complete the retraining within a reasonable time as determined by the Department. The retraining shall include training in the areas for which the underground storage tank system was not in compliance. The retraining may consist of a combination of on-site instruction and on-site testing, as well as in-class instruction and in-class testing, and, if available, the Department shall offer online instruction and online testing in lieu of in-class instruction and in-class testing. In-class instruction shall be provided by the Department at least once each quarter in each one of the regional offices of the Department. An operator required to be retrained pursuant to this subsection shall only be required to attend in-class instruction and in-class testing at the regional office closest to the facility for which the operator is designated.

(c) The primary operator shall maintain documentation to show that the operator has satisfactorily completed all training required by this section. (2010-154, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.94RR. Training requirements for emergency response operators.

(a) The Department shall develop a training program for emergency response operators. In order to satisfactorily complete the training, an emergency response operator shall, at a minimum, demonstrate all of the following:

(1) General understanding of the underground storage tank system at the facility, and knowledge of the location and proper operation of the safety and emergency response equipment.

(2) Understanding of the actions to be taken in response to an emergency, including situations posing an immediate danger or threat to the public or to the environment and requiring immediate action.

(3) Understanding of leak detection alarms and preparations needed to respond to alarms before a release has occurred.

(4) Recognition of unusual operating conditions, equipment failures, or environmental conditions that may indicate a release, and knowledge of the steps to take in response to a suspected release.

(5) Knowledge of immediate steps to take in response to a confirmed release to stop further release and to contain spills before they reach the environment.

(b) The primary operator is responsible for implementing the training program developed by the Department for emergency response operators. The primary operator shall train each emergency response operator of the underground storage tank system at the facility. Prior to training an emergency response operator, the primary operator shall have satisfactorily completed all training required by this section. The primary operator shall maintain documentation of training provided to emergency response operators. (2010-154, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.94SS. Tank systems for emergency power generators.

This section applies only to a facility that utilizes an underground storage tank system to store fuel solely for use by emergency power generators. A primary operator that has satisfactorily completed the training required by G.S. 143-215.94QQ at a facility shall be deemed trained as the primary operator at another facility that has identical spill prevention, overfill prevention, release detection, corrosion protection, emergency response, and product compatibility requirements as the facility for which the primary operator has satisfactorily completed training. (2010-154, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.94TT. Enforcement.

This Part may be enforced as provided in G.S. 143-215.94W, 143-215.94X, and 143-215.94Y. (2010-154, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.94UU. Effect on other laws.

The requirements of this Part are in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other requirements applicable to underground storage tank owners or operators, as defined in 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 280 (July 1, 2009 Edition), under law. (2010-154, s. 2.)

§§ 143-215.94VV through 143-215.94ZZ: Reserved for future codification purposes.

Part 3. Oil Terminal Facilities.

§ 143-215.95. Duties of Secretary.

The Secretary shall administer the provisions for registration of oil terminal facilities contained in this Part. In addition, he shall engage in such study and research concerning oil terminal facilities and their regulation in this State and elsewhere as may be required to furnish the General Assembly with a thorough factual basis for his recommendations for further legislation pursuant to this Part. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1987, c. 827, s. 154(3).)

§ 143-215.96. Oil terminal facility registration.

(a) The owner or operator of every oil terminal facility in the State shall secure a registration certificate from the Secretary. The Secretary shall not issue a registration certificate until the owner or operator has furnished the following information:

(1) Complete name of the owner and operator of the oil terminal facility together with addresses and telephone numbers;
(2) Number of employees of the oil terminal facility and the principal officers;
(3) Maps or sketches, based on criteria developed by the Secretary, showing property lines of the oil terminal facility and location of nearby watercourses or bodies of water as specified by the Secretary; and
(4) Summary of present and proposed procedures, if any, for prevention of oil spills.

(b) The owner or operator of an oil terminal facility shall secure a registration certificate no later than 30 days after the oil terminal facility begins operation. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1995, c. 504, s. 11.)

§ 143-215.97. Rules.

The Secretary may adopt rules to implement this Part. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1975, 2nd Sess., c. 983, s. 82; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1987, c. 827, s. 199.)

§ 143-215.98. Violations.

Any person who shall be adjudged to have violated any provision of this Part or any rule of the Secretary adopted hereunder shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor. (1973, c. 534, s. 1; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154(3), 200; 1993, c. 539, s. 1024; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

§ 143-215.99. Repealed by Session Laws 1975, c. 521, s. 1.

Part 4. Oil Refining Facility Permits.

§ 143-215.100. Oil refining facility permits.

No facility which is to be used or is capable of being used for the purpose of refining oil shall be initiated or constructed after July 1, 1975, without a permit from the Secretary. (1975, c. 521, s. 2; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1987, c. 827, s. 154.)

§ 143-215.101. Powers of the Secretary.

The Secretary has the power to:

(1) Adopt rules implementing this Part. Rules adopted under this Part may include the following matters:
    a. Requirements for submission of engineering reports, plans and specifications for the location and construction of oil terminal facilities.

b. Establishment of procedures and methods of reporting discharges and other occurrences prohibited by this Article.
c. Establishment of procedures, methods, means, and equipment to be used in the removal of oil pollutants.

(2) To deny the issuance of a permit upon a finding that:
a. The installation will have substantial adverse effects on wildlife or on fresh water, estuarine or marine fisheries; or
b. The operation of the installation will violate standards of air or water quality promulgated or administered by the Commission; or
c. The installation will have a substantial adverse effect on a publicly owned park, forest, or recreation area.

(3) To grant permits for the operation of existing or proposed oil refining facilities and to impose such terms and conditions therein as it shall deem necessary and appropriate to effectuate the purposes of this Article.

(4) To require the installation of such facilities and the employment of such protective measures and operating procedures as are deemed necessary to prevent, insofar as possible, any oil discharges to the waters or lands of the State.

(5) Repealed by Session Laws 1987, c. 827, s. 201. (1975, c. 521, s. 2; 1987, c. 827, ss. 154, 201.)

§ 143-215.102. Penalties.

(a) Civil Penalty. – Any person who violates any provision of this Part, or any rule, regulation or order made pursuant to this Part, shall incur, in addition to any other penalty provided by law, a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed ten thousand dollars ($10,000) for every such violation, the amount to be determined by the Secretary after taking into consideration the factors set out in G.S. 143B-282.1(b). The procedures set out in G.S. 143-215.6 and G.S. 143B-282.1 shall apply to civil penalties assessed under this section. The penalty herein provided for shall become due and payable when the person incurring the penalty receives a notice in writing from the Commission describing the violation with reasonable particularity and advising such person that the penalty is due. A person may contest a penalty by filing a petition for a contested case under G.S. 150B-23 within 30 days after receiving notice of the penalty. If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after notice of assessment has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the Superior Court of any county in which the violator resides or has his or its principal place of business to recover the amount of the assessment, unless the violator contests the assessment, or requests remission of the assessment in whole or in part as provided in G.S. 143-215.6. If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after the final agency decision or court order has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the Superior Court of any county in which the violator resides or has his or its principal place of business to recover the amount of the assessment.

The clear proceeds of civil penalties provided for in this section shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2.

(b) Criminal Penalties. – Any person who intentionally or knowingly or willfully violates any provision of this Part, or any rule, regulation or order made pursuant to this Part shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor which may include a fine to be not more than ten thousand dollars

($10,000). No proceeding shall be brought or continued under this subsection for or on account of a violation by any person who has previously been convicted of a federal violation or a local ordinance violation based upon the same set of facts. (1975, c. 521, s. 2; 1987, c. 827, s. 202; 1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1036, s. 7; 1993, c. 539, s. 1025; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1998-215, s. 71.)

Part 5. Limitation On Liability For Hazardous Materials Abatement.

§ 143-215.103. Definitions.

As used in this Part, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Discharge" shall mean leakage, seepage, or other release.

(2) "Hazardous materials" shall mean oil, low-level radioactive waste, and all materials and substances which are now or hereafter defined as toxic or hazardous by any State or federal law or by the regulations of any State or federal government agency.

(3) "Person" shall mean any individual, partnership, corporation, association, or other entity or employee thereof. (1987, c. 269, s. 1.)

§ 143-215.104. Limited liability for volunteers in hazardous material abatement.

Any person who provides assistance or advice in mitigating or attempting to mitigate the effects of an actual or threatened discharge of hazardous materials, or in preventing, cleaning up, or disposing of or in attempting to prevent, clean up or dispose of any such discharge, when the reasonably apparent circumstances indicate the need for prompt decisions and action, shall not be subject to civil liabilities of any type, unless:

(1) Prior to providing assistance or advice in mitigating or attempting to mitigate the effects of an actual or threatened discharge or in preventing, cleaning up, or disposal of or in attempting to prevent cleanup or disposal of any such discharge, he had incurred liability for the actual or threatened discharge;

(2) He receives compensation other than reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses for his services in rendering assistance or advice, except that an individual receiving compensation for employment from his regular employer for services performed in preventing, cleaning up, or disposing of or in attempting to prevent, clean up or dispose of a discharge shall not be deemed to have received compensation if his employer is entitled to the protection afforded by this Part; or

(3) His act or omission led to damages resulting from his gross negligence, or from his reckless, wanton, or intentional misconduct.

The limited immunity provided herein shall not be applicable to any act or omission or occurrence involving the operation of a motor vehicle. The limited immunity provided herein is waived to the extent of any indemnification by insurance for damages caused by such volunteer. (1987, c. 269, s. 1.)

Part 6. Dry-Cleaning Solvent Cleanup.

(Expires January 1, 2032 - see notes)

§ 143-215.104A. Title; sunset.

This part is the "Dry-Cleaning Solvent Cleanup Act of 1997" and may be cited by that name. This part expires January 1, 2032, except with respect to all of the following:

(1) G.S. 143-215.104K does not expire to the extent that it applies to liability arising from dry-cleaning solvent contamination described in a Dry-Cleaning Solvent Assessment Agreement or Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation Agreement entered into by the Environmental Management Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104H and G.S. 143-215.104I.

(2) Any Dry-Cleaning Solvent Assessment Agreement or Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation Agreement in force as of January 1, 2032, shall continue to be governed by the provisions of Part 6 of Article 21A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes as though those provisions had not been repealed.

(3) G.S. 143-215.104D(b)(2) does not expire; rules adopted by the Environmental Management Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D(b)(2) shall continue in effect; and those rules may be enforced pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104P, 143-215.104Q, and 143-215.104R, which shall remain in effect for that purpose. (1997-392, s. 1; 2009-483, ss. 5, 7; 2019-237, s. 6(a).)

§ 143-215.104B. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Definitions.

(a) Unless a different meaning is required by the context or unless a different meaning is set out in subsection (b) of this section, the definitions in G.S. 143-215.77, 130A-2, and 130A-290 apply throughout this Part.

(b) Unless a different meaning is required by the context, the following definitions apply in this Part. The definitions set out in this subsection apply only to the implementation of this Part and do not define or limit the scope of any other remedial program:

(1) "Abandoned dry-cleaning facility site" or "abandoned site" means any real property or individual leasehold space on which a dry-cleaning facility or wholesale distribution facility formerly operated.

(2) "Affiliate" has the same meaning as in 17 Code of Federal Regulations § 240.12b-2 (1 April 1996 Edition).

(3) "Commission" means the Environmental Management Commission.

(4) "Contaminant" means a regulated substance released into the environment.

(5) Renumbered.

(6) "Disposal" shall have the meaning ascribed to it in G.S. 130A-290.

(7) "Dry-cleaning facility" means a place of business located in this State and engaged in on-site dry-cleaning operations, other than a commercial uniform service or commercial linen supply facility.

(8) "Dry-cleaning operations" means cleaning of apparel and household fabrics by using one or more dry-cleaning solvents instead of water.

(9) "Dry-cleaning solvent" means any hydrocarbon or halogenated hydrocarbon used as a solvent in a dry-cleaning operation or the degradation products from these solvents.

(10) "Dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement" or "assessment agreement" means an agreement between the Commission and a potentially responsible party who desires an assessment of whether a release of dry-cleaning solvents at a dry-cleaning facility, an abandoned dry-cleaning facility site, or a wholesale distribution facility may be eligible for remediation under this Part and whether any other contaminants that are identified in the agreement may require

remediation under other remedial programs operated or administered by the Department.

(11) "Dry-cleaning solvent contamination" means the presence of dry-cleaning solvent in the waters or surface or subsurface soils of the State, the bedrock or other rock formations, or buildings in a concentration above the level requiring remediation pursuant to the rules implementing Article 21A of Chapter 143.

(12) "Dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement" or "remediation agreement" means an agreement between the Commission and a potentially responsible party who desires the cleanup of dry-cleaning solvent contamination resulting from a release at a dry-cleaning facility, an abandoned dry-cleaning facility site, or a wholesale distribution facility under this Part and any other contaminants that are identified in the agreement under other remedial programs operated or administered by the Department.

(13) "Facility" means a dry-cleaning facility or a wholesale distribution facility.

(14) "Fund" means the Dry-Cleaning Solvent Cleanup Fund.

(14a) "Halogenated hydrocarbon" means any hydrocarbon where at least one hydrogen atom is substituted by a halogen atom.

(15) "Hazardous waste" has the same meaning as in G.S. 130A-290.

(15a) "Hydrocarbon" means any linear, branched, saturated, or unsaturated compound whose molecules contain only carbon and hydrogen atoms.

(16) "Imminent hazard" means a situation that is likely to cause an immediate threat to human life, an immediate threat of serious physical injury, an immediate threat of serious adverse health effects, or a serious risk of irreparable damage to the environment if no immediate action is taken.

(17) "Local government" means a town, city, or county.

(18) "Operator" means any person operating a dry-cleaning facility or wholesale distribution facility, whether by lease, contract, or any other form of agreement.

(19) "Parent" has the same meaning as in 17 Code of Federal Regulations § 240.12b-2 (1 April 1996 Edition).

(20) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, ch. 19, s. 3, effective on and after April 1, 1998.

(21) "Potentially responsible party" means any person who may have liability for assessment, monitoring, treatment, mitigation, or remediation of dry-cleaning solvent contamination resulting from a release at a dry-cleaning facility, an abandoned dry-cleaning facility site, or a wholesale distribution facility.

(22) "Public health" means public health as the term is used in Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes and "human health" as the term is used in Articles 21 and 21A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes.

(23) "Regulated substance" means a hazardous waste, as defined in G.S. 130A-290; a hazardous substance, as defined in G.S. 143-215.77A; oil, as defined in G.S. 143-215.77; or other substance regulated under any remedial program implemented by the Department other than Part 2A of Article 21A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes.

(24) "Release" means any spillage, leakage, pumping, placement, emptying, or dumping of dry-cleaning solvents resulting from a dry-cleaning operation or the operation of a wholesale distribution facility.

(25) "Remedial program" means a program implemented by the Department for the remediation of any contaminant, including the programs implemented under Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes and the Oil Pollution and Hazardous Substances Control Act of 1978 under Part 2 of Article 21A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes but not the remedial program implemented under Part 2A of Article 21A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes.

(26) "Remediation" means action to clean up, mitigate, correct, abate, minimize, eliminate, control, or prevent the spreading, migration, leaking, leaching, volatilization, spilling, transporting, or further release of a contaminant into the environment in order to protect public health or the environment.

(27) "Response costs" means costs incurred in connection with a certified facility or abandoned site that the Commission determines are reasonably necessary and consistent with the applicable requirements of the Commission and any applicable dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement or dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement.

(28) "Subsidiary" has the same meaning as in 17 Code of Federal Regulations § 240.12b-2 (1 April 1996 Edition).

(29) "Treatment" shall have the meaning ascribed to it in G.S. 130A-290.

(29a) "Unrestricted use standards" when used in connection with "cleanup," "remediated", or "remediation" means that cleanup or remediation of contamination complies with generally applicable standards, guidance, or established methods governing the contaminants that are established by statute or adopted, published, or implemented by the Commission, the Commission for Public Health, or the Department instead of the risk-based standards established by the Commission pursuant to this Part.

(30) "Waters" means any stream, river, creek, brook, run, canal, swamp, lake, sound, tidal estuary, bay, reservoir, waterway, wetlands, or any other body or accumulation of water, surface or underground, public or private, natural or artificial, that is contained within, flows through, or borders upon this State, or any portion thereof, including those portions of the Atlantic Ocean over which this State has jurisdiction.

(31) "Wholesale distribution facility" means a place of business located in this State and engaged in the storage, distribution, or sale of dry-cleaning solvents for use in dry-cleaning facilities.

(32) "Wholesale distributor" means a person who operates a wholesale distribution facility. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 3; 2001-384, s. 11; 2007-182, s. 2; 2007-530, s. 1.)

§ 143-215.104C. (This Part has an expiration date – see notes) Dry-Cleaning Solvent Cleanup Fund.

(a) Creation. – The Dry-Cleaning Solvent Cleanup Fund is established as a special revenue fund to be administered by the Commission. Accordingly, revenue in the Fund at the end of a fiscal year does not revert. The Fund is created to provide revenue to implement this Part.

(b) Sources of Revenue. – The following revenue is credited to the Fund:

(1) Dry-cleaning solvent taxes collected under Article 5D of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes.

(2) Recoveries made pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104N and G.S. 143-215.104O.
(3) Gifts and grants made to the Fund.
(4) Revenues credited to the Fund under G.S. 105-164.44E.
(5) Application fees pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104F(a1).

(c) Disbursements. – A claim filed against the Fund may be paid only from monies in the Fund and only in accordance with the provisions of this Part. Any obligation to pay claims against the Fund shall be expressly contingent upon availability of monies in the Fund. Neither the State nor any of its agencies shall have any obligation to pay any costs for which monies are not available in the Fund. The provisions of this Part shall not constitute a contract, either express or implied, to pay costs in excess of the monies available in the Fund. In making disbursements from the Fund, the Commission shall obligate monies to facilities or sites with higher priority before facilities or sites of lower priority, and facilities or sites with equal priority in the order in which the facilities or sites were prioritized until the revenue is exhausted. Consistent with the provisions of this Part, the Commission may disburse monies from the Fund to abate imminent hazards by dry-cleaning solvent contamination at abandoned dry-cleaning facility sites that have not been certified. Up to twenty percent (20%) of the amount of revenue credited to the Fund in a year may be used to defray costs incurred by the Department and the Attorney General's Office in connection with administration of the program described in this Part, including oversight of response activities.

(d) Up to three percent (3%) of the amount of the Fund balance may be used by the Department in each fiscal year for investigation of inactive hazardous substance disposal sites that the Department reasonably believes to be contaminated by dry-cleaning solvent. If the contamination is determined to originate from a dry-cleaning facility, a potentially responsible party may petition for certification of the facility or abandoned facility site. Acceptance of a petition shall be conditioned upon the written acceptance by the petitioner of responsibility for the costs of investigation incurred by the Department pursuant to this subsection. Costs of investigation that are recovered pursuant to this subsection shall not exceed, and shall be credited toward, the financial responsibility of the petitioner pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104F(f). If a potentially responsible party does not petition for certification of the facility or abandoned facility site, the Commission may request the Attorney General to commence a civil action to secure reimbursement of costs incurred under this subsection. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, ss. 2, 5, 5.1-5.3; 2007-530, s. 2; 2014-100, s. 14.21(c); 2022-74, s. 12.6(a).)

§ 143-215.104D. (This Part has an expiration date – see notes) Powers of the Commission.

(a) Administrative Functions. – The Commission may delegate any or all of the powers enumerated in this subsection to the Department. The Commission shall:

(1) Accept petitions for certification and petitions to enter into dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreements or remediation agreements under this Part.
(2) Prioritize certified dry-cleaning facilities, certified wholesale distribution facilities, or certified abandoned dry-cleaning facility sites for the initiation of assessment or remediation activities.
(3) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 3, effective August 31, 2007.
(4) Schedule funding of assessment and remediation activities.
(5) Determine whether assessment or remediation is necessary at a site at which dry-cleaning solvent contamination has occurred.

(5a) Enter into contracts with private contractors for assessment and remediation activities at certified dry-cleaning facilities, certified wholesale distribution facilities, and certified abandoned dry-cleaning facility sites.

(6) Determine that all necessary assessment and remediation has been completed at a contamination site.

(7) Make payments from the Fund for the costs of assessment and remediation.

(b) Rulemaking. – The Commission shall adopt rules as are necessary to implement the provisions of this Part. Rules adopted by the Commission shall be consistent with and shall not duplicate, but may incorporate by reference, the rules adopted by the Commission for Health Services pursuant to Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes. The Commission shall not delegate the rulemaking powers provided in this subsection.

(1) The Commission may adopt rules governing:

a. Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 3, effective August 31, 2007.

b. The certification and decertification of facilities or abandoned sites.

c. The prioritization of facilities or abandoned sites and scheduling of funding for assessment and remediation activities. These rules shall provide for:

1. Consideration of the degree of harm or risk to public health and the environment.

2. Consideration of the order in which certification is issued for the facility or abandoned site.

3. Consideration of the relative cost of assessment and remediation activities.

4. Use of the Fund so as to maximize the reduction of harm or risk posed by certified facilities, certified abandoned sites, uncertified facilities and uncertified sites.

d. The disbursement of revenue from the Fund for payment of approved assessment or remediation costs.

e. The determination whether assessment or remediation is necessary at a contamination site.

f. The determination that all necessary assessment and remediation has been completed at a contamination site.

g. The terms and conditions of dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreements and remediation agreements.

h. The determination whether additional assessment or remediation is necessary at a contamination site previously closed under this Part.

(2) **(See editor's note)** The Commission may adopt rules establishing minimum management practices for handling of dry-cleaning solvent at dry-cleaning facilities and wholesale distribution facilities. The rules may:

a. Require that all perchloroethylene dry-cleaning machines installed at a dry-cleaning facility after the effective date of the rule or temporary rule meet air emission standards that equal or exceed the standards that apply to comparable dry-to-dry perchloroethylene dry-cleaning machines with integral refrigerated condensation.

b. Prohibit the discharge of dry-cleaning solvents or water that contains dry-cleaning solvents into sanitary sewers, septic systems, storm sewers, or waters of the State.
c. Require spill containment structures around dry-cleaning machines, filters, stills, vapor adsorbers, solvent storage areas, and waste solvent storage areas.
d. Require floor sealants for cleaning room areas if the Commission finds the sealants to be effective.
e. Require, by 1 January 2002, the use of improved solvent transfer systems to prevent releases at the time of delivery of solvents to a dry-cleaning facility.
f. Require any other solvent-handling practices the Commission may find necessary and appropriate to minimize the risk of releases at dry-cleaning facilities or wholesale distribution facilities.

(3) The Commission shall adopt rules establishing a risk-based approach applicable to the assessment, prioritization, and remediation of dry-cleaning solvent contamination resulting from releases at facilities or abandoned sites certified pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104G. The rules shall address, at a minimum:
a. Criteria and methods for determining remediation requirements, including the level of remediation necessary to assure adequate protection of public health and the environment.
b. The circumstances under which information specific to the dry-cleaning solvent contamination site should be considered and required.
c. The circumstances under which restrictions on the future use of any remediated dry-cleaning solvent contamination site should be considered and required as a means of achieving and maintaining an adequate level of protection for public health and the environment.
d. Strategies for the assessment and remediation of dry-cleaning solvent contamination, including presumptive remedial responses sufficient to provide an adequate level of protection as described under sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision.

(c) All rules adopted by the Commission shall be applicable to all dry-cleaning facilities, wholesale distribution facilities, and abandoned dry-cleaning facilities in the State and shall, to the maximum extent practicable, be cost-effective and technically feasible while protecting public health and the environment from the release of dry-cleaning solvents.

(d) Unless otherwise provided in this Part, the Commission may delegate any of its rights, duties, and responsibilities under this Part to the Department. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 6; 2007-182, s. 2; 2007-530, s. 3; 2025-25, s. 29(6).)

§ 143-215.104E: Repealed by Session Laws 2000-19, s. 3.

§ 143-215.104F. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Requirements for certification, assessment agreements, and remediation agreements.

(a) General Requirements. – Any person petitioning for certification of a facility or an abandoned site pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104G, for a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104H, or for a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement pursuant to

G.S. 143-215.104I, shall meet the requirements set out in this section and any other applicable requirements of this Part.

(a1) Application Fees. – Each person petitioning or co-petitioning for certification of a facility or an abandoned site pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104G shall pay an application fee of one thousand dollars ($1,000) to the Commission.

(b) Requirements for Potentially Responsible Persons Generally. – Every petitioner shall provide the Commission with:

(1) Any information that the petitioner possesses relating to the contamination at the facility or abandoned site described in the petition.

(2) Information necessary to demonstrate the person's ability to incur the response costs specified in subsection (f) of this section.

(3) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, c. 19, s. 3, effective on and after April 1, 1998.

(4) Information necessary to demonstrate that the petitioner, and any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of the petitioner, has substantially complied with:

a. The terms of any dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement, dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement, brownfields agreement, or other similar agreement to which the petitioner or any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of the petitioner has been a party.

b. The requirements applicable to any remediation in which the petitioner has previously engaged.

c. Federal and State laws, regulations, and rules for the protection of the environment.

(5) Evidence demonstrating that a release of dry-cleaning solvent has occurred at the facility or abandoned site and that the release has resulted in dry-cleaning solvent contamination.

(c) Requirement for Property Owners. – In addition to the information required by subsection (b) of this section, a petitioner who is the owner of the property on which the dry-cleaning solvent contamination identified in the petition is located shall provide the Commission a written agreement authorizing the Commission, its agent, and its private contractor to have access to the property for purposes of conducting assessment or remediation activities or determining whether assessment or remediation activities are being conducted in compliance with this Part and any assessment agreement or remediation agreement.

(c1) Costs incurred by the petitioner for activities to obtain certification of a facility or abandoned site shall not be reimbursable from the Fund.

(d) The Commission may reject any petition made pursuant to this Part in any of the following circumstances:

(1) The petitioner is an owner or operator of the facility described in the petition and the facility was not being operated in compliance with minimum management practices adopted by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D(b)(2) at the time the contamination was discovered.

(2) The petitioner is an owner or operator of the facility described in the petition and the petitioner owed delinquent taxes under Article 5D of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes at the time the dry-cleaning solvent contamination was discovered.

(3) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, c. 19, s. 3, effective on and after April 1, 1998.

(4) The petitioner fails to provide the information required by subsection (b) of this section.

(5) The petitioner falsified any information in its petition that was material to the determination of the priority ranking, the nature, scope and extent of contamination to be assessed or remediated, or the appropriate means to contain and remediate the contaminants.

(e) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 4, effective August 31, 2007.

(f) Financial Responsibility Requirements. – Each potentially responsible person who petitions the Commission to certify a facility or abandoned site shall accept written responsibility in the amount specified in this section for the assessment or remediation of the dry-cleaning solvent contamination identified in the petition. If two or more potentially responsible persons petition the Commission jointly, the requirements below shall be the aggregate requirements for the financial responsibility of all potentially responsible persons who are party to the petition. Unless an alternative arrangement is agreed to by co-petitioners, the financial responsibility requirements of this section shall be apportioned equally among the co-petitioners. The financial responsibility required shall be as follows:

(1) For dry-cleaning facilities owned by persons who employ fewer than five full-time employees, or the equivalent, in activities related to dry-cleaning operations during the calendar year preceding the date of the petition, one percent (1%) of the costs of assessment or remediation not exceeding one million dollars ($1,000,000).

(2) For abandoned dry-cleaning facility sites and for dry-cleaning facilities owned by persons who employ at least five but fewer than 10 full-time employees, or the equivalent, in activities related to dry-cleaning operations during the calendar year preceding the date of the petition, one and one-half percent (1.5%) of the costs of assessment or remediation not exceeding one million dollars ($1,000,000).

(3) For wholesale distribution facilities and for dry-cleaning facilities owned by persons who employ 10 or more full-time employees, or the equivalent, in activities related to dry-cleaning operations during the calendar year preceding the date of the petition, two percent (2%) of the costs of assessment or remediation not exceeding one million dollars ($1,000,000).

(4) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 4, effective retroactively to August 1, 2001, and applicable to assessment agreements and remediation agreements entered into on or after that date.

(g) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, c. 19, s. 3, effective on and after April 1, 1998. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, ss. 3, 4, 7; 2007-530, s. 4.)

§ 143-215.104G. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Certification of facilities and abandoned sites.

(a) A potentially responsible party may petition the Commission to certify a facility or abandoned site where a release of dry-cleaning solvent has occurred. The Commission shall certify the facility or abandoned site if the petitioner meets the applicable requirements of G.S. 143-215.104F. Upon its decision to certify a facility or abandoned site, the Commission shall inform the petitioner of its decision and of the initial priority ranking of the facility or site.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, c. 19, s. 8.

(c) A potentially responsible party who petitions for certification of a facility or abandoned site shall provide the Commission with either of the following:

(1) A written statement of the petitioner's intent to enter into an assessment agreement or remediation agreement.

(2) A written statement of the petitioner's intent to conduct assessment and remediation activities pursuant to subsection (d) of this section.

(d) A person who has access to property that is contaminated by dry-cleaning solvent and who has successfully petitioned for certification of the facility or abandoned site from which the contamination is believed to have resulted may undertake assessment or remediation of dry-cleaning solvent contamination located on the property consistent with the standards established by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D(b)(3) without first entering into a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement or a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement. No assessment or remediation activities undertaken pursuant to this subsection shall rely on standards that require the creation of land-use restrictions. A person who undertakes assessment or remediation activities pursuant to this subsection shall provide the Commission prior written notice of the activity. Costs associated with assessment or remediation activities undertaken pursuant to this subsection shall not be eligible for reimbursement from the Fund.

(e) The rejection of any petition filed pursuant to this section shall not affect the rights of any other petitioner, other than any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of the petitioner, under this Part. The rejection of a petition or the decertification of a facility or abandoned site may be the basis for rejection of a petition by any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of the petitioner for the facility or abandoned site. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 8.)

§ 143-215.104H. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Dry-Cleaning Solvent Assessment Agreements.

(a) Assessment Agreements. – One or more potentially responsible parties may petition the Commission to enter into a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement regarding a facility or abandoned site that has been certified pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104G. The Commission may, in its discretion, enter into an assessment agreement with any potentially responsible party who satisfies the requirements of this section and the applicable requirements of G.S. 143-215.104F. If more than one potentially responsible party petitions the Commission, the Commission may enter into a single assessment agreement with one or more of the petitioners. The Commission shall not unreasonably refuse to enter into an assessment agreement pursuant to this section. The Commission may require the petitioners to provide the Commission with any information necessary to demonstrate:

(1) The priority ranking assigned to the facility or site is consistent with the rules adopted by the Commission.

(2) through (4a) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 5, effective August 31, 2007.

(5) The petitioner has and will continue to have available the financial resources necessary to pay the share of response costs imposed on the petitioner by G.S. 143-215.104F.

(6) The permits or other authorizations required to conduct the assessment activities and to lawfully dispose of any hazardous substances or wastes generated by the assessment activities have been or can be obtained.

(7) The assessment activities will not increase the existing level of public exposure to health or environmental hazards at the contamination site.

(8) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 5, effective August 31, 2007.

(9) The petitioner has obtained the consent of other property owners to enter into their property for the purpose of conducting assessment activities specified in the assessment agreement.

(b) The terms and conditions of an assessment agreement regarding dry-cleaning solvent contamination shall be guided by and consistent with the rules adopted by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D and the disbursement authorities and limitations set out in this Part. An assessment agreement shall, subject to the availability of monies from the Fund:

(1) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, ch. 19, s. 9, effective June 26, 2000.

(1a) Require that the petitioner shall be liable to the Fund for an amount equal to the difference, if any, between the applicable amount for which the petitioner is responsible under G.S. 143-215.104F and the amount reasonably paid by the petitioner for assessment or remediation activities of the type specified in G.S. 143-215.104N(a)(1) through (7) and that are otherwise consistent with the requirements of this Part.

(2) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 5, effective August 31, 2007.

(c) The Commission may refuse to enter into a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement with any petitioner if:

(1) The petitioner will not accept financial responsibility for the petitioner's share of the response costs required by G.S. 143-215.104F.

(2) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 5, effective August 31, 2007.

(3) The petitioner fails to provide any information required by subsection (a) of this section.

(d) The refusal of the Commission to enter into a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement with any petitioner shall not affect the rights of any other petitioner under this Part, except that the refusal may be the basis for rejection of a petition by any parent, subsidiary or other affiliate of the petitioner for the facility or abandoned site.

(e) If the Commission determines from an assessment prepared pursuant to this Part that the degree of risk to public health or the environment resulting from dry-cleaning solvent contamination otherwise subject to assessment or remediation under this Part and Article 9 of Chapter 130A is acceptable in light of the criteria established pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D(b)(3) and Article 9 of Chapter 130A, the Commission shall issue a written statement of its determination and notify the owner or operator of the facility or abandoned site responsible for the contamination that no cleanup, no further cleanup, or no further action is required in connection with the contamination.

(f) If the Commission determines that no remediation or further action is required in connection with dry-cleaning solvent contamination otherwise subject to assessment or remediation pursuant to this Part and Article 9 of Chapter 130A, the Commission shall not pay any costs otherwise payable under this Part from the Fund other than costs reasonable and necessary to conduct the risk assessment pursuant to this section and in compliance with a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 9; 2007-530, s. 5.)

§ 143-215.104I. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Dry-Cleaning solvent remediation agreements.

(a) Upon the completion of assessment activities required by a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement, one or more potentially responsible parties may petition the Commission to

enter into a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement for any contamination requiring remediation. The Commission may, in its discretion, enter into a remediation agreement with any petitioner who satisfies the requirements of this section and the applicable requirements of G.S. 143-215.104F. If more than one potentially responsible party petitions the Commission, the Commission may enter into a single remediation agreement with one or more of the petitioners. The Commission shall not unreasonably refuse to enter into a remediation agreement pursuant to this section. The Commission may, in its discretion, enter into a remediation agreement that includes the assessment described in G.S. 143-215.104H. Petitioners shall provide the Commission with any information necessary to demonstrate:

(1) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, c. 19, s. 10, effective June 26, 2000.
(2) As a result of the remediation agreement, the contamination site will be suitable for the uses specified in the remediation agreement while fully protecting public health and the environment from dry-cleaning solvent contamination and any other contaminants included in the remediation agreement.
(3) There is a public benefit commensurate with the liability protection provided under this Part.
(4) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 6, effective August 31, 2007.
(5) The petitioner has complied with or will comply with all applicable procedural requirements.
(6) The remediation agreement will not cause the Department to violate the terms and conditions under which the Department operates and administers remedial programs, including the programs established or operated pursuant to Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes, by delegation or similar authorization from the United States or its departments or agencies, including the United States Environmental Protection Agency.
(7) The priority ranking assigned to the facility or site is consistent with the rules adopted by the Commission or the priority ranking that the petitioner agrees to accept is consistent with the rules adopted by the Commission.
(8) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 6, effective August 31, 2007.
(9) The petitioner will continue to have available the financial resources necessary to satisfy the share of response costs imposed on the petitioner by G.S. 143-215.104F.
(10) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 6, effective August 31, 2007.
(11) The consent of other property owners to enter into their property for purposes of conducting remediation activities specified in the remediation agreement.

(b) In negotiating a remediation agreement, parties may rely on land-use restrictions that will be included in a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation required under G.S. 143-215.104M. A remediation agreement may provide for remediation in accordance with standards that are based on those land-use restrictions.

(b1) For contaminated properties that are located in the area of a contamination site, in lieu of land-use restrictions authorized by subsection (b) of this section, parties may rely on other State or local land-use controls in negotiating a remediation agreement. Any land-use controls used shall adequately protect human health and the environment, both currently and in the future, from exposure to dry-cleaning solvent contamination. If controls are used in lieu of land-use restrictions, then a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation shall be prepared in accordance with the provisions set forth in subdivisions (1) through (4) of G.S. 143-215.104M(b) and filed in

accordance with subsections (c) through (g) of G.S. 143-215.104M. In the event that the owner of the property fails to submit and file the required Notice within the time specified, the Commission may prepare and file the Notice. This subsection shall not apply to properties on which a dry-cleaning facility is or was located which is the source of the contamination.

(c) A dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement shall contain a description of the contamination site that would be sufficient as a description of the property in an instrument of conveyance and, as applicable, a statement of:

(1) Any remediation, including remediation of contaminants other than dry-cleaning solvents, to be conducted on the property, including:
   a. A description of specific areas where remediation is to be conducted.
   b. The remediation method or methods to be employed.
   c. Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 6, effective August 31, 2007.
   d. A schedule of remediation activities.
   e. Applicable remediation standards. Applicable remediation standards for dry-cleaning solvent contamination shall not exceed the requirements adopted by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-104D(b)(3).
   f. A schedule and the method or methods for evaluating the remediation.

(2) Any land-use restrictions and State and local land-use controls that will apply to the contamination site or other property.

(3) The desired results of any remediation, land-use restrictions, or State or local land-use controls with respect to the contamination site.

(4) The guidelines, including parameters, principles, and policies within which the desired results are to be accomplished.

(5) The consequences of achieving or not achieving the desired results.

(6) The priority ranking of the facility or abandoned site.

(7) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 6, effective August 31, 2007.

(d) The Commission may refuse to enter into a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement or dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement with any petitioner if the petitioner fails to provide any information that is necessary to demonstrate the facts required to be shown by subsection (a) of this section.

(e) In addition to the basis set forth in subsection (d) of this section, the Commission may refuse to enter into a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement with an owner of the property on which a contamination site is located if the owner refuses to accept limitations on the future use of the property and to give notice of these limitations pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104M.

(f) The refusal of the Commission to enter into a dry-cleaning remediation agreement with any petitioner shall not affect the rights of any other petitioner, other than any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of the petitioner, under this Part. The refusal of the Commission to enter into a remediation agreement may be the basis for rejection of a petition by any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of the petitioner for the facility or abandoned site.

(g) The terms and conditions of a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement concerned with dry-cleaning solvent contamination shall be guided by and consistent with the rules adopted by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D and the disbursement authorities and limitations set out in this Part. A remediation agreement shall provide that the Commission's private contractor conduct assessment and remediation activities at the facility or abandoned site.

(h) Any failure of a petitioner or the petitioner's agents or employees to comply with the dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement constitutes a violation of this Part by the petitioner. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, ss. 10, 11, 13; 2007-530, s. 6; 2009-483, s. 1.)

§ 143-215.104J. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Decertification; termination of assessment agreements and remediation agreements.

(a) The Commission may decertify a facility or abandoned site or renegotiate or terminate an assessment agreement or remediation agreement with respect to any party thereto in the following circumstances:

(1) The owner or operator of the facility, at any time subsequent to the certification of the facility, violates any of the minimum management requirements adopted by the Commission pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D(b)(2).

(2) In the case of dry-cleaning contamination on property that is owned by a petitioner, the petitioner fails to file a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation, if required, as provided in G.S. 143-215.104M.

(3) The potentially responsible persons who are parties to a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement are unable to reach an agreement with the Commission to enter into a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement within the time specified in the assessment agreement.

(4) The payment of taxes assessed to the facility under Article 5D of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes is delinquent.

(5) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, ch. 19, s. 3, effective on or after April 1, 1998.

(6) The owner or operator fails to comply with all applicable requirements of this Part or fails to comply with all applicable requirements of an assessment agreement or remediation agreement.

(7) The owner or operator of a facility for which an assessment or remediation activity is scheduled or in progress transfers the ownership or operation of the facility or abandoned site to another person without the prior consent of the Commission and the execution of a substitute assessment agreement or remediation agreement.

(8) The standards applied to the dry-cleaning solvent contamination remediation or containment under the provisions of this Part and the dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement will, or are likely to, cause the Department to fail to comply with the terms and conditions under which it operates and administers a remediation program by delegation or similar authorization from the United States or one of its departments or agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency.

(9) A petitioner fails to pay the Commission any amounts for which a petitioner is responsible pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104F.

(b) Prior to decertifying any facility or abandoned site or renegotiating or terminating any assessment agreement or remediation agreement, the Commission shall give the petitioners notice and opportunity for hearing. The Commission is not required to give the petitioners notice and opportunity for hearing when the Commission reasonably takes an emergency action to abate an imminent hazard caused by or arising from assessment or remediation activities at a contamination site whether the Commission issues a special order pursuant to G.S. 143-215.2 or takes other action.

(c) Decertification of any facility or abandoned site or renegotiation or termination of any assessment agreement or remediation agreement pursuant to this section shall not affect the rights of any petitioner, other than a petitioner whose violation of the provisions of subsection (a) of this section was the basis for the decertification, renegotiation, or termination and any parent, subsidiary, or other affiliate of that petitioner. If the Commission decertifies a facility or abandoned site or terminates an assessment agreement or remediation agreement with any party to the agreement pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the Commission shall use its best efforts to negotiate a substitute agreement with any remaining parties to the agreement. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 3; 2007-530, s. 7.)

§ 143-215.104K. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Liability protection.

(a) A potentially responsible party who enters into an assessment agreement or remediation agreement with the Commission and who is complying with the agreement shall not be held liable for assessment or remediation of areas of contamination identified in the agreement except as specified in the assessment agreement or remediation agreement, so long as any activities conducted at the contamination site by or under the control or direction of the petitioner do not increase the risk of harm to public health or the environment and the petitioner is not required to undertake additional remediation to unrestricted use standards pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. The liability protection provided under this Part applies to all of the following persons to the same extent as the petitioner, so long as these persons are not otherwise potentially responsible parties or parents, subsidiaries, or affiliates of potentially responsible parties and the person is not required to undertake additional remediation to unrestricted use standards pursuant to subsection (c) of this section:

(1) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-503, s. 8, effective August 31, 2007.
(2) Any future owner of the contamination site.
(3) A person who occupies the contamination site.
(4) A successor or assign of any person to whom the liability protection provided under this Part applies.
(5) Any lender or fiduciary that provides financing to the petitioner to pay the petitioner's financial obligations under G.S. 143-215.104F.

(b) A person who conducts an environmental assessment or transaction screen on contamination resulting from a release at a certified facility or certified abandoned site consistent with a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement, if any was required under this Part, and who is not otherwise a potentially responsible party is not a potentially responsible party as a result of conducting the environmental assessment or transaction screen unless that person increases the risk of harm to public health or the environment by failing to exercise due diligence and reasonable care in performing the environmental assessment or transaction screen.

(c) If a land-use restriction set out in a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation required under G.S. 143-215.104M is violated, the owner of the contamination site at the time the land-use restriction is violated, the owner's successors and assigns, and the owner's agents who direct or contract for alteration of the contamination site in violation of a land-use restriction shall be liable for remediation of all contaminants to unrestricted use standards. A petitioner who completes the remediation required under a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement or other person who receives liability protection under this Part shall not be required to undertake additional remediation unless:

(1) The petitioner knowingly or recklessly provides false information that forms a basis for the remediation agreement or that is offered to demonstrate compliance with the remediation agreement or fails to disclose relevant information about contamination related to a facility or abandoned site.

(2) New information indicates the existence of previously unreported dry-cleaning solvent contaminants or any other contaminants to be remediated under the remediation agreement, or an area of previously unreported contamination by contaminants addressed in the remediation agreement is discovered to be associated with the facility or abandoned site and has not been remediated to unrestricted use standards, unless the remediation agreement is amended to include any previously unreported contaminants and any additional area of contamination. If the remediation agreement sets maximum concentrations for contaminants and new information indicates the existence of previously unreported areas of these contaminants, further remediation shall be required only if the areas of previously unreported contaminants raise the risk of the contamination to public health or the environment to a level less protective of public health and the environment than that required by the remediation agreement.

(3) The level of risk to public health and the environment from contaminants is unacceptable at or in the vicinity of the contamination site due to changes in exposure conditions, including (i) a change in land use that increases the probability of exposure to contaminants at or in the vicinity of the contamination site; (ii) the failure of remediation to mitigate risks to the extent required to make the contamination site fully protective of public health and the environment as planned in the remediation agreement; or (iii) removal of a State or local land-use control.

(4) The Commission obtains new information about a contaminant to be remediated under the remediation agreement and associated with the facility or abandoned site or exposures at or around the contamination site that raises the risk to public health or the environment associated with the contamination site beyond an acceptable range and in a manner or to a degree not anticipated in the remediation agreement. Any person whose use, including any change in use, of the contamination site causes an unacceptable risk to public health or the environment may be required by the Commission to undertake additional remediation measures under the provisions of this Part.

(5) A petitioner fails to file a timely and proper Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation under this Part.

(6) A facility or abandoned site loses its certification before the assessment and any remediation required under the provisions of this Part and the dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement are completed to the satisfaction of the Department.

(7) The remediation required in the remediation agreement has resulted in notification from the United States or its departments and agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, that the Department will violate the terms and conditions under which it operates and administers remedial

programs by delegation or similar authorization. (1997-392, s. 1; 2001-384, s. 11; 2007-530, s. 8; 2009-483, s. 2.)

§ 143-215.104L. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Public notice and community involvement.

(a) If a petitioner desires to enter into a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement based on remediation standards that rely on the creation of land-use restrictions, or on the use of State or local land-use controls, the Commission or the Commission's private contractor on behalf of the petitioner shall notify the public and the community in which the facility or abandoned site is located of the planned remediation activities. On behalf of the petitioner, the Commission or the Commission's private contractor shall prepare a Notice of Intent to Remediate a Dry-Cleaning Solvent Facility or Abandoned Site and a summary of the Notice of Intent. The Notice of Intent shall provide, to the extent known, a legal description of the location of the contamination site, a map showing the location of the contamination site, a description of the contaminants involved and their concentrations in the media of the contamination site, a description of the future use of the contamination site, any proposed investigation and remediation, and a description of any land-use restrictions and State and local land-use controls that will be used. Both the Notice of Intent and the summary of the Notice of Intent shall state the time period and means for submitting written comment and for requesting a public meeting on the proposed dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement. The summary of the Notice of Intent shall include a statement as to the public availability of the full Notice of Intent. After approval of the Notice of Intent and summary of the Notice of Intent by the Commission, the Commission or the Commission's private contractor shall provide a copy of the Notice of Intent to all local governments having jurisdiction over the contamination site. The Commission or Commission's private contractor shall publish the summary of the Notice of Intent in a newspaper of general circulation serving the area in which the contamination is located and shall mail a copy of the summary to each owner of property located within the contamination site and to each owner of property that is contiguous to the contamination site. The Commission or the Commission's private contractor shall also conspicuously post a copy of the summary of the Notice of Intent at the contamination site.

(b) Publication of the approved summary of the Notice of Intent in a newspaper of general circulation shall begin a public comment period of at least 30 days from the date of publication. During the public comment period, members of the public, residents of the community in which the contamination site is located, and local governments having jurisdiction over the contamination site may submit comment on the proposed dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement, including methods and degree of remediation, future land uses, and impact on local employment.

(c) Any person who desires a public meeting on a proposed dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement shall submit a written request for a public meeting to the Commission within 30 days after the public comment period begins. The Commission shall consider all requests for a public meeting and shall hold a public meeting if the Commission determines that there is significant public interest in the proposed remediation agreement. If the Commission decides to hold a public meeting, the Commission shall, at least 30 days prior to the public meeting, mail written notice of the public meeting to all persons who requested the public meeting and to any other person who had previously requested notice. The Commission shall also publish, at least 30 days prior to the date of the public meeting, a notice of the public meeting at least one time in a newspaper having general circulation in the county where the contamination site is located. In any

county in which there is more than one newspaper having general circulation, the Commission shall publish a copy of the notice in as many newspapers having general circulation in the county as the Commission in its discretion determines to be necessary to assure that the notice is generally available throughout the county. The Commission shall prescribe the form and content of the notice to be published. The Commission shall prescribe the procedures to be followed in the public meeting. The Commission shall take detailed minutes of the meeting. The minutes shall include any written comments received during the public meeting. The Commission shall take into account the comment received during the comment period and at the public meeting if the Commission holds a public meeting. The Commission shall incorporate into the remediation agreement provisions that reflect comment received during the comment period and at the public meeting to the extent practical. The Commission shall give particular consideration to written comment that is supported by valid scientific and technical information and analysis. (1997-392, s. 1; 2007-530, s. 9; 2009-483, s. 3.)

§ 143-215.104M. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation; land-use restrictions in deeds.

(a) Land-Use Restriction. – In order to reduce or eliminate the danger to public health or the environment posed by a dry-cleaning solvent contamination site, the owner of property upon which dry-cleaning solvent contamination has been discovered may file a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation approved by the Commission identifying the site on which the contamination has been discovered and providing for current or future restrictions on the use of the property. If a petitioner requests that a contamination site be remediated to standards that require land-use restrictions, the owner of the property must file a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation for the remediation agreement to become effective.

(b) Notice of Restriction. – A Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation shall include:

(1) A survey plat of the contamination site that has been prepared and certified by a professional land surveyor and that meets the requirements of G.S. 47-30.

(2) A legal description of the property that would be sufficient as a description in an instrument of conveyance.

(3) A description of the location and dimensions of the areas of potential environmental concern with respect to permanently surveyed benchmarks.

(4) The type, location, and quantity of dry-cleaning solvent contamination known to exist on the property.

(5) Any restrictions on the current or future use of the property or other property that are necessary to assure adequate protection of public health and the environment as provided in rules adopted pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104D(b)(3). These land-use restrictions may apply to activities on, over, or under the land, including, but not limited to, use of groundwater, building, filling, grading, excavating, and mining. Where a contamination site encompasses more than one parcel or tract of land, a composite map or plat showing all parcels or tracts may be recorded.

(c) Recordation of Notice. – After the Commission approves and certifies the Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation under subsection (a) of this section, a certified copy of a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation shall be filed in the office of the register of deeds of the county or counties in which the property described is located. The owner of the property shall file the Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation within 15 days of the property owner's receipt of

the Commission's approval of the notice or the effective date of the dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement, whichever is later.

(d) Notice of Transfer. – When property for which a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation has been filed is sold, leased, conveyed, or transferred, the deed or other instrument of transfer shall contain in the description section, in no smaller type than that used in the body of the deed or instrument, a statement that the property has been contaminated with dry-cleaning solvent and, if appropriate, cleaned up under this Part.

(e) Cancellation of Notice. – A Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation filed pursuant to this Part may, at the request of the owner of the property subject to the Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation, be canceled by the Secretary after the risk to public health and the environment associated with the dry-cleaning solvent contamination and any other contaminants included in the dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement has been eliminated as a result of remediation of the property. The Secretary shall forward notice of cancellation to the register of deeds of the county or counties where the Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation is recorded and request that the Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation be canceled. The notice of cancellation shall contain the names of the landowners as shown in the Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation.

(f) Enforcement. – Any restriction on the current or future use of property subject to a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation filed pursuant to this section shall be enforced by any owner of the property or by any other potentially responsible party. Any land-use restriction may also be enforced by the Commission through the remedies provided in this Part or by means of a civil action in the superior court. The Commission may enforce any land-use restriction without first having exhausted any available administrative remedies. Restrictions also may be enforced by any unit of local government having jurisdiction over any part of the property by means of a civil action without the unit of local government having first exhausted any available administrative remedy. A land-use restriction may also be enforced by any person eligible for liability protection under this Part who will lose liability protection if the land-use restriction is violated. A restriction shall not be declared unenforceable due to lack of privity of estate or contract, due to lack of benefit to particular land, or due to lack of privity of any property interest in particular land. Any person who owns or leases a property subject to a land-use restriction under this section shall abide by the land-use restriction. Failure to submit an annual certification that land-use restrictions are properly recorded and followed shall result in a notice from the Commission to the property owner. The notice shall inform the person of the actions that need to be taken in order for the person to come into compliance and specify a date by which the person must comply, which shall not be less than 30 calendar days from the date the notice is mailed. Any person who fails to comply within the time specified shall then be subject to enforcement procedures as provided in this Part.

(g) Relation to Brownfields Notice. – Unless the Commission decertifies a previously certified facility or a previously certified abandoned site, this section shall apply in lieu of the provisions of Article 9 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes and Parts 1 and 2 of Article 21A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes for properties remediated under this Part. (1997-392, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 11A.119(b); 2007-530, s. 10; 2011-186, s. 6; 2012-18, s. 1.21.)

§ 143-215.104N. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Disbursement of dry-cleaning solvent assessment and remediation costs; limitations; cost recovery.

(a) Allowable Costs. – To the extent monies are available in the Fund, the Commission shall pay for reasonable and necessary assessment and remediation activities at a contamination

site associated with a certified facility or a certified abandoned site pursuant to a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement or dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement for the following assessment and remediation response costs, for which appropriate documentation is submitted:

(1) Costs of assessment with respect to dry-cleaning solvent contamination.
(2) Costs of treatment or replacement of potable water supplies affected by the contamination.
(3) Costs of remediation of affected soil, groundwater, surface waters, bedrock or other rock formations, or buildings.
(4) Monitoring of the contamination.
(5) Inspection and supervision of activities described in this subsection.
(6) Reasonable costs of restoring property as nearly as practicable to the conditions that existed prior to activities associated with assessment and remediation conducted pursuant to this Part.
(7) Other activities reasonably required to protect public health and the environment.

(b) Limitations. – Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Commission shall not make any disbursement from the Fund:

(1) For costs incurred in connection with facilities or abandoned sites not certified pursuant to G.S. 143-215.104G.
(2) For costs not incurred pursuant to a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement or a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement.
(3) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 11, effective August 31, 2007.
(4) For costs at a contamination site that has been identified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as a federal Superfund site pursuant to 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 300 (1 July 1996 Edition), except that the Commission may authorize distribution of the required State match in an amount not to exceed two hundred thousand dollars ($200,000) per year per site. The Commission shall not delegate its authority to disburse funds pursuant to this subdivision.
(5) For remediation beyond the level required under the Commission's risk-based criteria for determining the appropriate level of remediation.
(6) For assessment or remediation response costs incurred in connection with any individual dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement or dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement in excess of five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) per year. However, that the Commission may disburse up to one million dollars ($1,000,000) per year for assessment and remediation costs incurred in connection with a facility or an abandoned site if the facility or abandoned site has been certified and poses an imminent hazard.
(7) That would result in a diminution of the Fund balance below one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000), unless an emergency exists in connection with a dry-cleaning solvent contamination abandoned site that constitutes an imminent hazard.
(8) For any costs incurred in connection with dry-cleaning solvent contamination from a facility located on a United States military base or owned by the United States or a department or agency of the United States.

(9) For any costs incurred in connection with dry-cleaning solvent contamination from a facility or abandoned site owned by the State or a department or agency of the State, unless the contamination at the State-owned site was not caused by the State, but was caused by another person.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2007-530, s. 11, effective August 31, 2007.

(d) If, at any time, the Commission determines that the cost of assessment and remediation activities incurred pursuant to existing dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreements and dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreements equals or exceeds the total revenues expected to be credited to the Fund over the life of the Fund, the Commission shall publish notice of the determination in the North Carolina Register. Following the publication of a notice pursuant to this section, the Commission may continue to enter into dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreements and dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreements until the day of adjournment of the first regular session of the General Assembly that begins after the date the notice is published, but shall have no authority to enter into additional dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreements and dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreements after that date unless the Commission first determines either (i) that revenues will be available from the Fund to pay the costs of assessment and remediation activities expected to be incurred pursuant to the agreements, or (ii) that assessment and remediation activities undertaken pursuant to the agreements will be paid entirely from sources other than the Fund. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "day of adjournment" shall mean: (i) in the case of a regular session held in an odd-numbered year, the day the General Assembly adjourns by joint resolution for more than 10 days, and (ii) in the case of a regular session held in an even-numbered year, the day the General Assembly adjourns sine die.

(e) If the cleanup of the contamination site is not completed through fault of the petitioner as required by the remediation agreement, the petitioner shall reimburse the Fund for any response costs previously disbursed from the fund for the cleanup, with interest. The Commission shall request the Attorney General to commence a civil action to secure repayment of response costs and interest of the costs. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, ss. 12, 14(a), (b); 2007-530, s. 11; 2009-483, s. 4.)

§ 143-215.104O. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Remediation of uncertified sites.

(a) In the event the owner or operator of a facility or the current owner of an abandoned site cannot be identified or located, unreasonably refuses to enter into either an assessment agreement or remediation agreement or cannot be made to comply with the provisions of an assessment agreement or remediation agreement between the petitioner and the Commission, the Commission may direct the Department or a private contractor engaged by the Commission to use staff, equipment, or materials under the control of the Department or contractor or provided by other cooperating federal, State, or local agencies to develop and implement a plan for abatement of an imminent hazard, or to provide interim alternative sources of drinking water to third parties affected by dry-cleaning solvent contamination resulting from a release at the facility or abandoned site. The cost of any of these actions shall be paid from the Fund. The Department or private contractor shall keep a record of all expenses incurred for personnel and for the use of equipment and materials and all other expenses of developing and implementing the remediation plan.

(b) The Commission shall request the Attorney General to commence a civil action to secure reimbursement of costs incurred under this section.

(c) In the event a civil action is commenced pursuant to this Part to recover monies paid from the Fund, the Commission may recover, in addition to any amount due, the costs of the action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and investigation expenses. Any monies received or recovered

as reimbursement shall be paid into the Fund or other source from which the expenditures were made. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 15.)

§ 143-215.104P. (This Part has an expiration date – see notes) Enforcement procedures; civil penalties.

(a) The Secretary may assess a civil penalty of not more than ten thousand dollars ($10,000) or, if the violation involves a hazardous waste, of not more than thirty-two thousand five hundred dollars ($32,500) against any person who:

(1) Repealed by Session Laws 2000, ch. 19, s. 3, effective on and after April 1, 1998.

(2) Engages in dry-cleaning operations using dry-cleaning solvent for which the appropriate sales or use tax has not been paid.

(3) Fails to comply with rules adopted by the Commission pursuant to this Part.

(4) Fails to file, submit, or make available, as the case may be, any documents, data, or reports required by this Part.

(5) Violates or fails to act in accordance with the terms, conditions, or requirements of any special order or other appropriate document issued pursuant to G.S. 143-215.2.

(6) Falsifies or tampers with any recording or monitoring device or method required to be operated or maintained under this Part or rules implementing this Part.

(7) Knowingly renders inaccurate any recording or monitoring device or method required to be operated or maintained under this Part or rules implementing this Part.

(8) Knowingly makes any false statement, representation, or certification in any application, record, report, plan, or other document filed or required to be maintained under this Part or rule implementing this Part.

(9) Knowingly makes a false statement of material fact in a rulemaking proceeding or contested case under this Part.

(10) Refuses access to the Commission or its duly designated representative to any premises for purposes of conducting a lawful inspection provided for in this Part or rule implementing this Part.

(b) If any action or failure to act for which a penalty may be assessed under subsection (a) of this section is continuous, the Secretary may assess a penalty not to exceed ten thousand dollars ($10,000) per day or, if the violation involves a hazardous waste, not to exceed thirty-two thousand five hundred dollars ($32,500) per day. A penalty for a continuous violation shall not exceed two hundred thousand dollars ($200,000) for each period of 30 days during which the violation continues.

(c) In determining the amount of the penalty, the Secretary shall consider the factors set out in G.S. 143B-282.1(b). The procedures set out in G.S. 143B-282.1 shall apply to civil penalty assessments that are presented to the Commission for final agency decision.

(d) The Secretary shall notify any person assessed a civil penalty for the assessment and the specific reasons therefor by registered or certified mail or by any means authorized by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4. Contested case petitions shall be filed pursuant to G.S. 150B-23 within 30 days of receipt of the notice of assessment.

(e) Requests for remission of civil penalties shall be filed with the Secretary. Remission requests shall not be considered unless made within 30 days of receipt of the notice of assessment. Remission requests must be accompanied by a waiver of the right to a contested case hearing pursuant to Chapter 150B of the General Statutes and a stipulation of the facts on which the assessment was based. Consistent with the limitations in G.S. 143B-282.1(c) and (d), remission requests may be resolved by the Secretary and the violator. If the Secretary and the violator are unable to resolve the request, the Secretary shall deliver the remission request and the recommended action to the Committee on Civil Penalty Remissions of the Environmental Management Commission appointed pursuant to G.S. 143B-282.1(c).

(f) If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after notice of assessment has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the superior court of any county in which the violator resides or the violator's principal place of business is located in order to recover the amount of the assessment, unless the violator contests the assessment as provided in subsection (d) of this section or requests remission of the assessment in whole or in part as provided in subsection (e) of this section. If any civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after the final agency decision or order has been served on the violator, the Secretary shall request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the superior court of any county in which the violator resides or the violator's principal place of business is located to recover the amount of the assessment. A civil action must be filed within three years of the date the final agency decision or court order was served on the violator. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 3; 2011-398, s. 53; 2022-74, s. 12.6(b); 2025-25, s. 29(6).)

§ 143-215.104Q. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Enforcement procedures; criminal penalties.

(a) Any person who negligently commits any of the offenses set out in subdivisions (1) through (10) of G.S. 143-215.104P(a) shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor, which may include a fine not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000) per day of violation, provided that the fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of two hundred thousand dollars ($200,000) for each period of 30 days during which a violation continues.

(b) Any person who knowingly and willfully commits any of the offenses set out in subdivisions (1) through (10) of G.S. 143-215.104P(a) shall be guilty of a Class I felony, which may include a fine not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) per day of violation, provided that this fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) for each period of 30 days during which the violation continues. For the purposes of this subsection, the phrase "knowingly and willfully" shall mean "intentionally and consciously" as the courts of this State, according to the principles of common law, interpret the phrase in the light of reason and experience.

(c) (1) Any person who knowingly commits any of the offenses set out in subdivisions (3) through (10) of G.S. 143-215.104P(a) and who knows at that time that he thereby places another person in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury shall be guilty of a Class C felony, which may include a fine not to exceed two hundred fifty thousand dollars ($250,000) per day of violation, provided that this fine shall not exceed a cumulative total of one million dollars ($1,000,000) for each period of 30 days during which the violation continues.

(2) For the purposes of this subsection, a person's state of mind is knowing with respect to:

a. His conduct, if he is aware of the nature of his conduct.
b. An existing circumstance, if he is aware or believes that the circumstance exists.
c. A result of his conduct, if he is aware or believes that his conduct is substantially certain to cause danger of death or serious bodily injury.

(3) Under this subsection, the following should be considered in determining whether a defendant who is a natural person knew that his conduct placed another person in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury:
a. The person is responsible only for actual awareness or actual belief that he possessed, and
b. Knowledge possessed by a person other than the defendant but not by the defendant himself may not be attributed to the defendant.

(4) It is an affirmative defense to a prosecution under this subsection that the conduct charged was conduct consented to by the person endangered and that the danger and conduct charged were reasonably foreseeable hazards of an occupation, a business or profession, or of medical treatment or medical or scientific experimentation conducted by professionally approved methods, and the person had been made aware of the risks involved prior to giving consent. The defendant may establish an affirmative defense under this subdivision by a preponderance of the evidence.

(d) No proceeding shall be brought or continued under this section for or on account of a violation by any person who has previously been convicted of a federal violation based upon the same set of facts.

(e) In proving the defendant's possession of actual knowledge, circumstantial evidence may be used, including evidence that the defendant took affirmative steps to shield himself from relevant information. Consistent with the principles of common law, the subjective mental state of defendants may be inferred from their conduct.

(f) For the purposes of the felony provisions of this section, a person's state of mind shall not be found "knowingly and willfully" or "knowingly" if the conduct that is the subject of the prosecution is the result of any of the following occurrences or circumstances:

(1) A natural disaster or other act of God that could not have been prevented or avoided by the exercise of due care or foresight.

(2) An act of third parties other than agents, employees, contractors, or subcontractors of the defendant.

(3) An act done in reliance on the written advice or emergency on-site direction of an employee of the Department. In emergencies, oral advice may be relied upon if written confirmation is delivered to the employee as soon as practicable after receiving and relying on the advice.

(4) An act causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to public health, safety, or welfare and done in compliance with other conflicting environmental requirements or other constraints imposed in writing by environmental agencies or officials after written notice is delivered to all relevant agencies that the conflict exists and will cause a violation of the identified standard.

(5) Violations causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to public health, safety, or welfare for which no enforcement action or civil penalty could have been imposed under any written civil enforcement guidelines in use by the

Department at the time. This subdivision shall not be construed to require the Department to develop or use written civil enforcement guidelines.

(6) Occasional, inadvertent, short-term violations causing no significant harm to the environment or risk to public health, safety, or welfare. If the violation occurs within 30 days of a prior violation or lasts for more than 24 hours, it is not an occasional, short-term violation.

(g) All general defenses, affirmative defenses, and bars to prosecution that may apply with respect to other criminal offenses under law may apply to prosecutions brought under this section or other criminal statutes that refer to this section and shall be determined by the courts of this State according to the principles of common law as they may be applied in light of reason and experience. Concepts of justification and excuse applicable under this section may be developed in light of reason and experience.

(h) All general defenses, affirmative defenses, and bars to prosecution that may apply with respect to other criminal offenses under law may apply to prosecutions brought under this section or other criminal statutes that refer to this section and shall be determined by the courts of this State according to the principles of common law as they may be applied in light of reason and experience. Concepts of justification and excuse applicable under this section may be developed in light of reason and experience.

(i) For purposes of this section, the term "person" means, in addition to the definition contained in G.S. 143-212, any responsible corporate or public office or employee. If a vote of the people is required to effectuate the intent and purpose of this Article by a county, city, town, or other political subdivision of the State and the vote on the referendum is against the means or machinery for carrying out the intent and purpose, then this section shall not apply to elected officials or to any responsible appointed officials or employees of the county, city, town, or other political subdivision. (1997-392, s. 1.)

§ 143-215.104R. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Enforcement procedures; injunctive relief.

Whenever the Commission has reasonable cause to believe that any person has violated or is threatening to violate any of the provisions of this Part or rule implementing this Part, the Commission may, either before or after the institution of any other action or proceeding authorized by this Part, request the Attorney General to institute a civil action in the name of the State upon the relation of the Commission for injunctive relief to restrain the violation or threatened violation and for other and further relief in the premises as the court shall deem proper. The Attorney General may institute an action in the superior court of the county in which the violation occurred or may occur or, in the Attorney General's discretion, in the superior court of the county in which the person responsible for the violation or threatened violation resides or has a principal place of business. Upon a determination by the court that the alleged violation of the provisions of this Part or the rules of the Commission has occurred or is threatened, the court shall grant the relief necessary to prevent or abate the violation or threatened violation. Neither the institution of the action nor any of the proceedings thereon shall relieve any party to the proceedings from any penalty prescribed for violation of this Part. In the event a civil action is commenced pursuant to this section, the Commission may recover the costs of the action, including attorneys' fees and investigation expenses. All monies received or recovered shall be paid into the Fund or other source from which the expenditures were made. (1997-392, s. 1.)

§ 143-215.104S. (Expires January 1, 2032 – see notes) Appeals.

Any person who is aggrieved by a decision of the Commission under G.S. 143-215.104F through G.S. 143-215.104O may commence a contested case by filing a petition under G.S. 150B-23 within 60 days after the Commission's decision. If no contested case is initiated within the allotted time period, the Commission's decision shall be final and not subject to review. Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 6-19.1, no party seeking to compel remediation of dry-cleaning solvent contamination in excess of that required by a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement approved by the Commission shall be eligible to recover attorneys' fees. (1997-392, s. 1; 2000-19, s. 16; 2002-165, s. 1.5; 2011-398, s. 54.)

§ 143-215.104T. (This Part has an expiration date – see notes) Construction of this Part.

(a) This Part is not intended to and shall not be construed to:

(1) Affect the ability of local governments to regulate land use under Chapter 160D of the General Statutes. The use of the identified contamination site and any land-use restrictions in the dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement shall be consistent with local land-use controls adopted under those statutes.

(2) Amend, modify, repeal, or otherwise alter any provision of any remedial program or other provision of law relating to civil and criminal penalties or enforcement actions and remedies available to the Department, except as may be provided in a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement.

(3) Prevent or impede the immediate response of the Department or responsible party to an emergency that involves an imminent or actual release of a regulated substance that threatens public health or the environment.

(4) Relieve a person receiving liability protection under this Part from any liability for contamination later caused by that person at a facility or abandoned site.

(5) Affect the right of any person to seek any relief available against any party to the dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement who may have liability with respect to the facility or abandoned site, except that this Part does limit the relief available against any party to a remediation agreement with respect to assessment or remediation of the contamination site to the assessment remediation required under the remediation agreement.

(6) Affect the right of any person who may have liability with respect to the facility or abandoned site to seek contribution from any other person who may have liability with respect to the facility or abandoned site and who neither received nor has liability protection under this Part.

(7) Prevent the State from enforcing specific numerical remediation standards, monitoring, or compliance requirements specifically required to be enforced by the federal government as condition to receive program authorization, delegation, primacy, or federal funds.

(8) Create a defense against the imposition of criminal and civil fines or penalties or administrative penalties otherwise authorized by law and imposed as the result of the illegal disposal of waste or from the pollution of the land, air, or waters of this State on a facility or abandoned site.

(9) Relieve a person of any liability for failure to exercise due diligence and reasonable care in performing an environmental assessment or transaction screen.

(b) Notwithstanding the provision of the Tort Claims Act, G.S. 143-291 through G.S. 143-300.1 or any other provision of law waiving the sovereign immunity of the State of North Carolina, the State, its agencies, officers, employees, and agents shall be absolutely immune from any liability in any proceeding for any injury or claim arising from negotiating, entering into, implementing, monitoring, or enforcing a dry-cleaning solvent assessment agreement, a dry-cleaning solvent remediation agreement, or a Notice of Dry-Cleaning Solvent Remediation under this Part or any other action implementing this Part. (1997-392, s. 1; 2007-530, s. 12; 2022-62, s. 36.)

§ 143-215.104U. (This Part has an expiration date – see notes) Reporting requirements.

(a) The Secretary shall include in the status of solid waste management report required to be submitted pursuant to G.S. 130A-309.06(c) a report on at least the following:

(1) A list of all dry-cleaning solvent contamination reported to the Department.

(2) A list of all facilities and abandoned sites certified by the Commission and the status of contamination associated with each facility or abandoned site.

(3) An estimate of the cost of assessment and remediation required in connection with facilities or abandoned sites certified by the Commission and an estimate of assessment and remediation costs expected to be paid from the Fund.

(4) A statement of receipts and disbursements for the Fund.

(5) A statement of all claims against the Fund, including claims paid, claims denied, pending claims, anticipated claims, and any other obligations.

(6) The adequacy of the Fund to carry out the purposes of this Part together with any recommendations as to measures that may be necessary to assure the continued solvency of the Fund.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 2017-10, s. 4.14(e), effective May 4, 2017. (1997-392, s. 1; 2017-10, s. 4.14(e); 2020-74, s. 11(i); 2020-78, s. 7.2(i).)

Part 7. Risk-Based Remediation for Petroleum Releases from Aboveground Storage Tanks and Other Sources.

§ 143-215.104AA. Standards for petroleum releases from aboveground storage tanks and other sources.

(a) Legislative Findings and Intent.

(1) The General Assembly finds the following:

a. Risk-based corrective action gives the State flexibility in requiring different levels of cleanup based on scientific analysis of different site characteristics and allowing no action or no further action at sites that pose little risk to human health or the environment.

b. A risk-based approach to the cleanup of environmental damage can adequately protect human health and the environment while preventing excessive or unproductive cleanup efforts, thereby assuring that limited resources are directed toward those sites that pose the greatest risk to human health and the environment.

c. Risk-based corrective action has successfully been used to clean up contamination from petroleum underground storage tanks, as well as contamination at sites governed by other environmental programs.

(2) The General Assembly intends the following:

a. To direct the Commission to adopt rules that will provide for risk-based assessment and cleanup of discharges and releases of petroleum from aboveground storage tanks and other sources. These rules are intended to combine groundwater standards that protect current and potential future uses of groundwater with risk-based analysis to determine the appropriate cleanup levels and actions.
b. That these rules apply to all discharges or releases that are reported on or after the date the rules become effective in order to ascertain whether cleanup is necessary, and if so, the appropriate level of cleanup.
c. That these rules may be applied to any discharge or release that has been reported at the time the rules become effective at the discretion of the Commission.
d. That these rules, and decisions of the Commission and the Department in implementing these rules, facilitate the completion of more cleanups in a shorter period of time.

(b) The Commission shall adopt rules to establish a risk-based approach for the cleanup of discharges and releases of petroleum from aboveground storage tanks and other sources. At a minimum, the rules shall address all of the following:

(1) The circumstances where site-specific information should be considered.
(2) Criteria for determining acceptable cleanup levels.
(3) The acceptable level or range of levels of risk to human health and the environment. Rules that use the distance between a source area of a confirmed discharge or release to a water supply well or a private drinking water well, as those terms are defined under G.S. 87-85, shall include a determination whether a nearby well is likely to be affected by the discharge or release as a factor in determining levels of risk.
(4) Remediation standards and processes.
(5) Requirements for financial assurance, where the Commission deems it necessary.
(6) Appropriate fees to be applied to persons who undertake remediation of environmental contamination under site-specific remediation pursuant to this Part to pay for administrative and operating expenses necessary to implement this Part and rules adopted to implement this Part.

(c) The Commission may require an owner, operator, or landowner to provide information necessary to determine the degree of risk to human health and the environment that is posed by a discharge or release of petroleum from an aboveground storage tank or other source.

(d) If the Commission concludes that a discharge or release poses a degree of risk to human health or the environment that is no greater than the acceptable level of risk established by the Commission, the Commission shall notify an owner, operator, or landowner who provides the information required by subsection (c) of this section that no cleanup, further cleanup, or further action will be required unless the Commission later determines that the discharge or release poses an unacceptable level of risk or a potentially unacceptable level of risk to human health or the environment. If the Commission concludes that a discharge or release poses a degree of risk to human health or the environment that requires further cleanup, the Commission shall notify the owner, operator, or landowner who provides the information required by subsection (c) of this section of the cleanup method approved by the Commission. This section shall not be construed to

prohibit an owner, operator, or landowner from selecting a cleanup method other than the cleanup method approved by the Commission so long as the Commission determines that the alternative cleanup method will address imminent threats to human health and the environment.

(e) Remediation of sites with off-site migration shall be subject to the following provisions:

(1) Contaminated sites at which contamination has migrated to off-site properties may be remediated pursuant to this Part if either of the following occur:

a. The person who proposes to conduct the remediation pursuant to this Part remediates the contaminated off-site property to unrestricted use standards.

b. The person who proposes to conduct the remediation pursuant to this Part (i) provides the owner of the contaminated off-site property with a copy of this Part and the publication produced by the Department pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection and (ii) obtains written consent from the owner of the contaminated off-site property for the person to remediate the contaminated off-site property using site-specific remediation standards pursuant to this Part. Provided that the site-specific remediation standards shall not allow concentrations of contaminants on the off-site property to increase above the levels present on the date the written consent is obtained. Written consent from the owner of the off-site property shall be on a form prescribed by the Department and include an affirmation that the owner has received and read the publication and authorizes the person to remediate the owner's property using site-specific remediation standards pursuant to this Part.

(2) In order to inform owners of contaminated off-site property of the issues and liabilities associated with the contamination on their property, the Department, in consultation with the Consumer Protection Division of the North Carolina Department of Justice and the North Carolina Real Estate Commission, shall develop and make available a publication entitled "Contaminated Property: Issues and Liabilities" to provide information on the nature of risk-based remediation and how it differs from remediation to unrestricted use standards, potential health impacts that may arise from residual contamination, as well as identification of liabilities that arise from contaminated property and associated issues, including potential impacts to real estate transactions and real estate financing. The Department shall update the publication as necessary.

(3) If, after issuance of a no further action determination, the Department determines that additional remedial action is required for a contaminated off-site property, the responsible party shall be liable for the additional remediation deemed necessary.

(4) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to preclude or impair any person from obtaining any and all other remedies allowed by law.

(f) This section shall not be construed to limit the authority of the Commission to require investigation, initial response, and abatement of a discharge or release pending a determination by the Commission under subsection (d) of this section as to whether cleanup, further cleanup, or further action will be required. Notwithstanding any authority provided under this section to the Commission and the Department allowing use of a risk-based approach for the cleanup of

discharges and releases of petroleum from aboveground storage tanks and other sources, a responsible party shall, at a minimum, do all of the following:

(1) Perform initial abatement actions to (i) measure for the presence of a release where contamination is most likely to be present and to confirm the precise source of the release; (ii) determine the possible presence of free product and to begin free product removal immediately; (iii) continue to monitor and mitigate any additional fire, vapor, or explosion hazards posed by vapors or by free product; and (iv) submit a report summarizing these initial abatement actions within 20 days after a discharge or release. For purposes of this subdivision, the term "free product" means a non-aqueous phase liquid which may be present within the saturated zone or in surface water.

(2) Remove, or in situ remediate, contaminated soil or free product that would act as a continuing source of contamination to groundwater. Actions conducted in conformance with this subdivision shall require approval by the Department.

(g) This section shall apply to discharges of petroleum from aboveground storage tanks and other sources not otherwise governed by the provisions of G.S. 143-215.94V. (2015-286, s. 4.7(b).)