

455G.13 Cost recovery enforcement.

1. *Full recovery sought from owner.* The board shall seek full recovery from the owner, operator, or other potentially responsible party liable for the released petroleum which is the subject of a corrective action, for which the fund expends moneys for corrective action or third-party liability, and for all other costs, including reasonable attorney fees and costs of litigation for which moneys are expended by the fund in connection with the release. When federal cleanup funds are recovered, the funds are to be deposited to the remedial account of the fund and used solely for the purpose of future cleanup activities.

2. *Limitation of liability of owner or operator.* Except as provided in subsection 3:

a. The board or the department of natural resources shall not seek recovery for expenses in connection with corrective action for a release from an owner or operator eligible for assistance under the remedial account except for any unpaid portion of the deductible or copayment. This section does not affect any authorization of the department of natural resources to impose or collect civil or administrative fines or penalties or fees. The remedial account shall not be held liable for any third-party liability.

b. An owner or operator's liability for a release for which coverage is admitted under the underground storage tank insurance fund established in section 455G.11, Code 2003, shall not exceed the amount of the deductible.

3. *Owner or operator not in compliance, subject to full and total cost recovery.* Notwithstanding subsection 2, the liability of an owner or operator shall be the full and total costs of corrective action and bodily injury or property damage to third parties, as specified in subsection 1, if the owner or operator has not complied with the financial responsibility or other underground storage tank rules of the department of natural resources or with this chapter and rules adopted under this chapter.

4. *Treble damages for certain violations.*

a. Notwithstanding subsections 2 and 3, the owner or operator, or both, of a tank are liable to the fund for punitive damages in an amount equal to three times the amount of any cost incurred or moneys expended by the fund as a result of a release of petroleum from the tank if the owner or operator did any of the following:

(1) Failed, without sufficient cause, to respond to a release of petroleum from the tank upon, or in accordance with, a notice issued by the director of the department of natural resources.

(2) After May 5, 1989, failed to perform any of the following:

(a) Failed to register the tank, which was known to exist or reasonably should have been known to exist.

(b) Intentionally failed to report a known release.

b. The punitive damages imposed under this subsection are in addition to any costs or expenditures recovered from the owner or operator pursuant to this chapter and in addition to any other penalty or relief provided by this chapter or any other law.

c. However, the state, a city, county, or other political subdivision shall not be liable for punitive damages.

5. *Lien on tank site.* Any amount for which an owner or operator is liable to the fund, if not paid when due, by statute, rule, or contract, or determination of liability by the board or department of natural resources after hearing, shall constitute a lien upon the real property where the tank, which was the subject of corrective action, is situated, and the liability shall be collected in the same manner as the environmental protection charge pursuant to section 424.11.

6. *Joinder of parties.* The department of natural resources has standing in any case or contested action related to the fund or a tank to assert any claim that the department may have regarding the tank at issue in the case or contested action, upon motion and sufficient showing by a party to a cost recovery or subrogation action provided for under this section, the court or the administrative law judge shall join to the action any potentially responsible party who may be liable for costs and expenditures of the type recoverable pursuant to this section.

7. *Strict liability.* The standard of liability for a release of petroleum or other regulated substance as defined in section 455B.471 is strict liability.

8. *Third-party contracts not binding on board, proceedings against responsible party.* An insurance, indemnification, hold harmless, conveyance, or similar risk-sharing or risk-shifting agreement shall not be effective to transfer any liability for costs recoverable under this section. The fund, board, or department of natural resources may proceed directly against the owner or operator or other allegedly responsible party. This section does not bar any agreement to insure, hold harmless, or indemnify a party to the agreement for any costs or expenditures under this chapter, and does not modify rights between the parties to an agreement, except to the extent the agreement shifts liability to an owner or operator eligible for assistance under the remedial account for any damages or other expenses in connection with a corrective action for which another potentially responsible party is or may be liable. Any such provision is null and void and of no force or effect.

9. *Later proceedings permitted against other parties.* The entry of judgment against a party to the action does not bar a future action by the board or the department of natural resources against another person who is later alleged to be or discovered to be liable for costs and expenditures paid by the fund. Notwithstanding section 668.5 no other potentially responsible party may seek contribution or any other recovery from an owner or operator eligible for assistance under the remedial account for damages or other expenses in connection with corrective action for a release for which the potentially responsible party is or may be liable. Subsequent successful proceedings against another party shall not modify or reduce the liability of a party against whom judgment has been previously entered.

10. *Claims against potentially responsible parties.*

a. Upon payment by the fund for corrective action or third-party liability pursuant to this chapter, the rights of the claimant to recover payment from any potentially responsible party, are assumed by the board to the extent paid by the fund. A claimant is precluded from receiving double compensation for the same injury.

b. In an action brought pursuant to this chapter seeking damages for corrective action or third-party liability, the court shall permit evidence and argument as to the replacement or indemnification of actual economic losses incurred or to be incurred in the future by the claimant by reason of insurance benefits, governmental benefits or programs, or from any other source.

c. A claimant may elect to permit the board to pursue the claimant's cause of action for any injury not compensated by the fund against any potentially responsible party, provided the attorney general determines such representation would not be a conflict of interest. If a claimant so elects, the board's litigation expenses shall be shared on a pro rata basis with the claimant, but the claimant's share of litigation expenses is payable exclusively from any share of the settlement or judgment payable to the claimant.

11. *Exclusion of punitive damages.* The fund shall not be liable in any case for punitive damages.

12. *Recovery or subrogation — installers and inspectors.* Notwithstanding any other provision contained in this chapter, the board or a person insured under the underground storage tank insurance fund established in section 455G.11, Code 2003, has no right of recovery or right of subrogation against an installer or an inspector who was insured by the underground storage tank insurance fund for the tank giving rise to the liability other than for recovery of any deductibles paid.

89 Acts, ch 131, §54; 91 Acts, ch 252, §33 – 36; 98 Acts, ch 1068, §12, 13; 99 Acts, ch 114, §36; 2005 Acts, ch 19, §66, 67; 2011 Acts, ch 25, §114

Referred to in §455G.8, 455G.21