

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT
Underground Storage Tank (UST) Study

September 2, 2009

I. SESSION INTRODUCTION AND GROUND RULES

A. Introductions, Purpose of Focus Group, and Ground Rules

1. Moderator is professional from local survey research firm (Lisa Dropkin).
2. Review of recruitment process - random selection among households; variation in location (e.g., urban vs. suburban/rural), and demographics (income, education, age), and type of water source (will attempt to recruit separate groups for well versus municipal water source).
3. Introductions of all participants. Please tell us your first name and town of residence, and tell us briefly about who lives in your household.
4. Purpose of focus group is to help develop a public opinion survey about how cleaning up contaminated sites may affect property values.

B. Focus Group Particulars

1. Ground Rules

- a. Session is being videotaped.
 - b. Reassurance that the discussion is strictly confidential, no names will be used in the reporting, and no one will contact you regarding anything you say or follow-up with you in any way.
- c. Expect the session to last up to 2 hours
 - d. Want to hear from everyone. Important that everyone contribute; there are no right or wrong answers; simply asking for honest opinion. Everyone's opinion is important.
 - e. Important for people to speak one at a time; may need to interrupt periodically to make sure we can hear the responses; ask that you respect the right of others to be heard and voice opinions which may be different than yours; try not to let the group sway you in your opinion, just say what you think.
- f. Moderator's job is to keep group on task.

2. Questions

- a. Any questions or concerns before we begin?

II. HOME OWNERSHIP BACKGROUND

A. Background

1. When did you buy your current home?
2. Do you remember how much you paid for it?
3. How much do you think your home is worth now? More/less/same- how much?
4. If you had put your home on the market, say two or three years ago, when the housing market was at its peak, how much do you think it would have sold for?

B. Neighborhood

5. What sorts of things do you think contribute to the value of your home (open-ended follow-ups regarding size, age, style, condition, location, etc.)
6. Do you have any of the following within ½ mile or so of your home?
 - a. A supermarket
 - b. A school
 - c. A church
 - d. A factory or industrial facility
 - e. A public park
 - f. A bank
 - g. A water tower
 - h. A radio station's antenna or cell phone tower
7. Do you think that having the following near your home increases its value, decreases it, or has no effect?
 - a. A supermarket
 - b. A school
 - c. A church
 - d. A factory or industrial facility
 - e. A public park
 - f. A bank
 - g. A water tower
 - h. A radio station's antenna or cell phone tower
8. Suppose you wanted to sell your home soon (within 6 months). What could you do to increase its value?
9. Suppose you wanted to sell your home soon (within 6 months). Are you expecting any changes in your neighborhood within this period that you think will increase its value? Decrease it? (think, for example, of road repairs, planned changes in the traffic patterns, road closures, environmental changes, opening or closing of shops and restaurants, etc.)

III. SERVICE STATIONS- GENERAL

- A. Commercial facilities in neighborhood/town
 - 1. What types of business and services are in close proximity to your home?
 - 2. Do you have any gas stations in your neighborhood? How far away? How many gas stations are in your neighborhood?
 - 3. What are the advantages of living near a gas station? (leave open ended, probe about convenience, services if nothing volunteered)
 - 4. What are the disadvantages of living near a gas station? (leave open ended, probe about congestion, noise, leaks if nothing volunteered)
 - 5. Do you think that having a gas station nearby contributes to your property value or detracts from it? Why?

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- A. General environmental issues
 - 1. What, if any, types of local environmental issues are you concerned about?
 - a. Air pollution
 - b. Contaminants in drinking water
 - c. Pesticides in fruits and vegetables
 - d. Harmful substances in consumer products
 - e. Habitat destruction
 - f. Wetland protection
 - g. Other?

V. HOUSEHOLD WATER (For groups on private well water only)

- A. Water Quality
 - 1. Are you satisfied with the quality of your tap water (for example taste, clarity)?
 - 2. Do you do anything to treat your drinking water (whole-home system, tap filter, Brita-style pitcher, use bottled water)?
 - 3. Have you ever had the water at your home tested?
 - 4. What did you test it for?
 - 5. Did anyone advise you to test your water?
 - 6. Did you have the testing done yourself (by a specialized lab service) or did a government agency do it for you?
 - 7. What were the test results?
 - 8. Did you do anything differently in light of test results?

V. HOUSEHOLD WATER (For groups on municipal water only)

- A. Water Quality
 - 1. Are you satisfied with the quality of your tap water (for example taste, clarity)?
 - 2. Do you do anything to treat your drinking water (whole-home system, tap filter, Brita-style pitcher, use bottled water)?

3. Do you know where your water comes from?
4. Are you familiar with any tests on your water?

VI. ASPECTS OF USTs

A. General Awareness

1. Are you familiar with the term “underground storage tanks?”
2. Do you know what they are typically used for?
3. Do you think they are common? How many do you think there are in your town / county / the state of Maryland?

B. Leaks

4. Are you aware of any incidents where gas, oil, or some other substance leaked from underground storage tanks in the state of Maryland?
5. How did you hear about this?
6. Are you aware of any cases of leaking underground storage tanks near your home?
7. About how far away were these cases?
8. If a leak occurred do you think you would hear about it?
9. If so from where/whom? (for example Maryland Department of the Environment, neighbors, newspaper, gas station owners, TV, radio, Internet, etc.)

C. Various Risks

10. What do you think the consequences of a leak from an underground storage tank might be?
11. What do you think are possible impacts of leaking underground storage tanks on wildlife, habitat and ecosystems?
12. How do you think leaks from USTs reach wildlife, habitat and ecosystems?
13. How do you think wildlife, habitat and ecosystems get exposed to the substances from leaking USTs? Via air, soil, water? What kind of water? Ingestion? Inhalation?
14. What do you think are possible impacts of leaking underground storage tanks on people? Do you think there are health risks? If so, what health risks are of concern?
15. How do people get exposed to the substances from leaking USTs? Via air, soil, water? What kind of water? Ingestion? Inhalation?
16. Which of these would you be most concerned about? Why?
17. Have you heard of any of the individual constituents of some petroleum products (e.g., Benzene, BTEX, MTBE)? Have you heard information about specific health risks or other issues associated with those compounds?

D. LUST Cleanups

18. Do you think it is possible to clean up leaking UST sites? (Why, why not?)
19. Have you heard of ways in which it is done?
20. How long do you think it takes to clean up leaks?

21. Which federal or state or local agencies do you believe are in charge of supervising cleanup activities at a leaking UST site?
22. What do you think the main goals of cleanup are? What do you think they should be?
23. If the agency in charge states that a LUST site has been cleaned up, do you think this means it no longer poses any concerns to...
 - a. Wildlife?
 - b. Habitat and ecosystems?
 - c. Human health/people?
2. In some cases, agencies and scientists have found that petroleum and related substances break down naturally. If the agency deems this natural process along with ongoing monitoring, a good substitute for active cleanup, do you think this means the pollution no longer poses any threat to...
 - a. Wildlife?
 - b. Habitat and ecosystems?
 - c. Human health/people?

VII. POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON PROPERTY VALUES

A. General Questions

1. Would you expect a home exactly like yours to be worth more, less, or about the same if it were next to a gas station?
2. What about near a gas station?
3. How far away would it need to be to have no effect at all?
4. What if there was an underground storage tank leak at the gas station?
5. Do you feel that after a leaking tank was cleaned up that nearby property prices would return to their pre-spill levels?
6. How long would that take?
7. Do you think the affect on nearby property values would be different if the site was cleaned-up and left vacant versus cleaned-up with the same gas station remaining?
8. What about a new gas station? What about another type of commercial facility (to the extent this is ever possible)?
9. Suppose you were thinking about putting your house on the market and have heard that a leak was discovered at a nearby gas station- what would you do? (still put house on market? Wait and see if it affects nearby prices? Probe and contrast with question about X% reduction due to general market trends)