

## FM 186-2 Hydrocarbon Mitigation Chemical - HS Code/Schedule B



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Ed Grubbs  
*Courtesy FM186*

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The name of this environmental product is more than a mouthful. But wrapping your tongue around it could prove to be worthwhile if you manage hazardous waste cleanup in parking lots, on shop floors or at gasoline service stations.

A water-based, pH neutral solution that quickly breaks down and encapsulates hydrocarbons, FM 186 has been marketed by Environmental Chemical Solutions Inc. of Gig Harbor, Wash., since 1998.

Thanks to increased enforcement of federal and state guidelines for cleaning up small hydrocarbon spills, a growing number of industries are instituting hazardous waste programs.

But the prevalent program requires spills be cleaned up and placed in hazardous materials containers that are kept on site until the waste is taken to hazardous waste disposal sites, the nearest of which to Alaska is in Washington state.

ECS President Ed Grubbs said these programs can be dangerous if personnel have little or no haz-mat training and cleaned up substances are kept on site.

"It's very dangerous for employees to deal with gasoline," he said. "The hazardous waste drums are flammable and don't meet (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) guidelines or regulation fire codes."

FM 186, a blend of tall oil and a little-known surfactant-like chemical that is bacteria enhancing and not bacteria degrading, is the centerpiece of ECS' program. When used in 1:1 concentrations with refined hydrocarbons, it costs a third of the HAZMAT container program and is a safer alternative, Grubbs said.

"We started working with companies and put together a program that taught their people how to handle gasoline and diesel safely, and we developed a product that suppresses gasoline vapors, binds up benzene so it can't leach out into the atmosphere and also remediates the ground by breaking down the hydrocarbon molecules to a level that bacteria can feed on easily," he said.

Thus, any nonproduced hydrocarbon, from gasoline to vegetable oil, that is cleaned up with FM 186 can be disposed of as nonflammable natural trash and thrown away in a regular garbage bin, Grubbs said. Sound too good to be true?

That's what ECS' customers initially said.

Costco's manager of gasoline operations, for example, was skeptical. But the company now uses FM 186 in its service stations from Florida to Alaska.

Slowly, ECS is winning over state regulators and customers to the advantages of the ECS program. Recently feted as Small Business of the Year in Pierce County, Wash., ECS is growing, and FM 186 is fast becoming the darling of fire departments across the country, company officials say. The product is now sold in 46 states and seven countries, but its debut in Alaska was delayed until a year ago when Chevron Products Co. began using it at area service stations. The average service station uses about \$40 worth of FM 186 per month, and that cost includes training, a spill kit and ongoing support, Grubbs said. Today, Tesoro Alaska Petroleum as well as Costco have joined the ranks of Alaska customers.

"The biggest challenge we have now is that corporate (America) doesn't know who we are," Grubbs said.

In Alaska, ECS plans to overcome that deficiency with a network of sales representatives, including Ron Johnson on the Kenai Peninsula, Jim Hill in Fairbanks and Jack Wiederholt from Willow to Girdwood.

"Alaska seems to be on the cutting edge of everybody's environmental concerns, so ECS wants the product here," Wiederholt said.

ECS is conducting additional tests and research to broaden the range of applications for FM 186, which also keeps hydrocarbons from harming fish.

"We're not ready to take on something like your pipeline spill, yet," Grubbs quipped.

"Are we the answer to everything?" he asked. "No."

"Are we working toward it?" Grubbs asked. "Yes."