What is petroleum?

The Act defines "petroleum" to mean crude oil, or a fraction thereof, that is liquid at 60 degrees Fahrenheit temperature and 14.7 pounds per square inch absolute pressure (normal atmospheric pressure at sea level). Some examples of petroleum products that would be subject to APSA if stored in aboveground storage tanks are as follows:

- Petroleum-based liquid fuels, including:
  - Aviation fuels (including jet, turbine, and piston fuels)
  - Automotive and other petroleum-based internal combustion engine fuels
  - Fuel oils and distillate fuels (turbine, boiler, and other types)
  - Heating oil and distillates
  - Illuminating (e.g., lamp) oils
- Gasoline and other fuel blending stocks
- Petroleum-based lubricating, tapping, seal, penetrating, machining, and road oils and greases (including waste oils)
- Petroleum distillates
- Petroleum- or petroleum-distillate based additives (including fuel, oil, ink and paint additives)
- Petroleum solvents
- Petroleum spirits (e.g., mineral spirits, Stoddard solvent, paint thinners, etc.)
- Hydrocarbon liquids
- Naphthenes and naphthalenes of all types
- Olefins, alkanes, alkylates, aromatics
- Petroleum-based inks and ink extenders
- Oil-based paints, coatings, thinners and solvents
- Petroleum extender oils
- Mineral oils (derived from petroleum)
- Crude oil

From an APSA standpoint (per HSC 25270.2), "petroleum" is a liquid (at 60F and atmospheric pressure) that is crude oil or its fractions (or straight distillates). Synthesized compounds that may contain hydrocarbons as part of the molecule are not considered petroleum. However, a liquid mixture of these compounds with petroleum in any amount would be petroleum under APSA.

For some cases, in order to determine if a liquid meets the definition of petroleum, the chemical compound, ingredients and manufacturing process need to be understood (refinery fraction or distillate vs. chemical synthesis). In general, the vast majority of “APSA petroleum” will cause a sheen, sludge or emulsion.

Simple example: small alcohols do not cause a sheen, sludge or emulsion and are fully miscible, and analysis would show that they contain hydrocarbons (or at least some hydrocarbon connected to the -OH alcohol functional group). They are likely not oils under the federal SPCC rule.

For APSA, alcohols are manufactured via a set of chemical reactions/syntheses (which may even use a crude oil or fraction as a feedstock), and, therefore, are not crude oil, fractions or distillates so would not be a 'petroleum' under APSA.