

Heating Oil Tanks

Oil from a leaking tank can contaminate the soil and become a threat to drinking water supplies.

OIL SPILLS

Spills occur for a variety of reasons including corrosion, overfilling, improper tank location and improper installation and/or maintenance. If not properly installed and maintained oil tanks have the potential to affect human health, the environment and become a financial liability. Remember that you, the home/business owner, are responsible for reporting and cleaning up an oil spill. Once an accident occurs, you must act immediately to stop the spread of oil and start the cleanup.

For information on your responsibilities and more complete details on regulations, as well as some helpful questionnaires, please see the following documents/websites:

www.gov.ns.ca/nse/petroleum/docs/OilTankGuide.pdf

www.gov.ns.ca/nse/petroleum/docs/OilTankInstall.pdf

<http://www.novascotia.ca/nse/contaminatedsites/domestic.asp>



SOME RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Your oil tank should be installed and labelled to show that it meets national construction standards. These standards include:
 - ⇒ National Standard of Canada's CAN/ULC-S602, *Aboveground Steel Tanks for the Storage of Combustible Liquids Intended to Be Used as Heating and/or Generator Fuels*
 - ⇒ Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada's ULC/ORD C80, *Aboveground Non-metallic Tanks for Fuel Oil*
- Consider an innovative tank. Manufacturers use a number of technologies to produce tanks that have a longer life including double-walled tanks, fibreglass tanks, composite plastic/metal tanks, lined tanks, stainless steel tanks and heavier-walled steel tanks. They may come in different shapes to enhance stability; feature a different oil outlet type to prevent water accumulation in the tank; or include an anti-siphon device or a fuel safety valve to prevent oil from spilling if the supply line is broken. It is recommended that you investigate these options when purchasing a new or replacement tank. The initial cost may be higher, but the tank service life is usually longer.
- Your tank should be installed by a trained installer. Domestic heating oil tanks are to be installed in accordance with:
 - ⇒ Canadian Standards Association's CSA B-139, *Installation Code for Oil-Burning Equipment* (latest recognized edition)
 - ⇒ *National Fire Code of Canada* (latest edition)

- Your installer should provide you with proof that they have received training on these codes.
- All heating oil tank systems should be inspected regularly by a heating service professional. Your oil filter(s) should also be changed regularly.
- Arrange to have sludge and water removed from the tank every year. If left unchecked, water and sludge will accelerate internal corrosion in unprotected steel tanks (i.e., tanks not constructed or lined with non-corrosive materials). Also, check with your fuel company about fuel oil additives to reduce the water in your tank.
- Apply a rust-proof paint to all parts of the tank, including legs and bottom.
- Keep the tank relatively full over the summer so that less water from condensation will collect inside.
- Determine if your tank has any metal tags or labels attached. These tags will help identify whether the tank was manufactured to national construction standards, the year it was manufactured and, in the case of steel tanks, the gauge (or thickness) of steel used to build the tank.
- Whenever feasible, indoor tanks have several benefits. They are not exposed to the elements, including extreme temperatures, rain, snow, and ice; conditions that cause external corrosion and create condensation which leads to internal corrosion. Indoor tanks have less risk of frozen supply lines and better performance due to the fact that the fuel is kept at a more constant temperature. Indoor tanks also have less risk of accidental damage and vandalism.

- There should be no odours from a properly installed tank. If the tank begins to weep from internal corrosion, early detection from odours is more likely with an indoor tank than with one located outside. Early detection can save thousands of dollars in cleanup and environmental costs.
- If feasible, have a release barrier (e.g., drip tray) installed under any single walled tank or oil supply line fittings (e.g. oil filter) in order to contain any leaks.
- If possible, seal any existing floor drains, sumps, or other openings located near an indoor tank, to prevent any spills from escaping.
- Ensure that the oil tank is properly supported, with the legs centred, to prevent it from shifting, settling, or falling over. The support legs of an above-ground tank should be installed on a concrete pad or reinforced patio stones. A well-drained subgrade should also be used to provide drainage.
- Do not locate an outdoor oil tank directly under house eaves where it may be subjected to falling snow and icicles or to increased external pitting from dripping water.



- Ensure that your oil tank is not in contact with leaves, plants or grass. Their moisture can lead to accelerated corrosion of the tank.
- Protect the oil supply line from the weight of snow, ice, or other objects that could cause the line to pinch or break and leak oil.
- Install the oil supply line on a downward slope from the tank to the building to prevent the accumulation of water and possible freezing of the line.
- Use an oil supply line that meets industry standards, and has a minimum of one horizontal loop in the line to allow for frost heaving and movement.
- Once a domestic heating oil tank is removed from service, both the tank and any remaining oil, sludge or residue must be removed and disposed of in an environmentally acceptable manner. Do not abandon old tanks or their contents, or allow oil, sludge or residue to leak into the environment. It is illegal and irresponsible. Old steel can be recycled into new products. Many metal recycling facilities, local scrap or salvage yards, and municipal disposal facilities accept old oil tanks. Ask your tank installer if they will take back the old tank as part of the contract to install the new tank. If not, your installer or local municipality may help you find a proper disposal location.

MORE INFORMATION:

For more information on domestic heating oil tanks, contact tank supply and service companies (see *Tanks* or *Heating* in the Yellow Pages), heating oil suppliers, or the Nova Scotia Chapter of the Canadian Oil Heat Association.

You may also contact your nearest Nova Scotia Environment office at:

Nova Scotia Environment
150 Exhibition St, 2nd Floor, Provincial Building
Kentville, NS B4N 4E5

Kentville Office: (902) 679-6086

Website: www.gov.ns.ca/nse

To report a heating oil leak or spill to Nova Scotia Environment, call the office listed above during regular business hours, or call Environmental Emergencies at any hour: 1-800-565-1633

For more information on your responsibilities as a homeowner in the event of a spill, view Nova Scotia Environment's Domestic Fuel Oil Spill Policy at:

<https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/contaminatedsites/oilspillfactsheet.asp>

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