

## In Summary:

There are approximately 400,000 aboveground and underground home heating oil tanks in Virginia. Commonly, homeowners and home purchasers ask what must be done with an old oil tank. Owners who wish to preclude future problems or liabilities associated with the tank should "close" the tank structure in accordance with the Uniform Statewide Building Code. This involves obtaining a building permit from the local code official, and proceeding to close the tank in place or removing it from the ground. In-place closure involves emptying the tank and filling it with an inert solid material like sand, gravel, or cement slurry. Removal involves emptying the tank, mitigating any fire hazards, and safely removing the tank for recycling or disposal.

It is recommended that you review and use the included handy checklist entitled "**Homeowner's Monthly Tank Checklist**". A "**List of Consultants**" is available from any DEQ Regional Office as well as our web page [www.deq.state.va.us/tanks](http://www.deq.state.va.us/tanks).

For further information, please contact DEQ Central Office, at (804) 698-4000 or DEQ's Regional Office nearest you:

**Southwest Region**  
355 Deadmore St.  
P.O. Box 1688  
Abingdon, VA 24212  
(276) 676-4800

**Blue Ridge Region (Roanoke)**  
3019 Peters Creek Rd.  
Roanoke, VA 24019  
(540) 562-6700

**Piedmont Region**  
4949-A Cox Road  
Glen Allen, VA 23060  
(804) 527-5020

**Valley Region**  
4411 Early Road  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801  
(540) 574-7800

**Northern Region**  
13901 Crown Court  
Woodbridge, VA 22193  
(703) 583-3800

**Tidewater Region**  
5636 Southern Blvd.  
Virginia Beach, VA 23462  
(757) 518-2000

**Blue Ridge Region (Lynchburg)**  
7705 Timberlake Rd.  
Lynchburg, VA. 24502  
(434) 582-5120

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## Homeowner's Monthly Tank Checklist

- \_\_\_ Check fuel use (an increase may indicate a tank or line leak). Watch deliveries to prevent spills/overfills. Keep track of your oil consumption (note any sudden, unexplained change).
- \_\_\_ Check for water in the tank (record measurement, if taken).
- \_\_\_ Check oil/water separator (if present), newer models are metal, older are glass (which can shatter during freezing temperatures), drain if needed. If you are unsure, talk to your heating professional.
- \_\_\_ Look for unexplained dead or withered vegetation in area.
- \_\_\_ Make sure the vent line clear.
- \_\_\_ Make sure the fill gauge (if one is installed) is functioning.
- \_\_\_ Check the overflow whistle (if one is installed) .
- \_\_\_ Check for signs of spills or overfills around the fill pipe or vent lines
- \_\_\_ Any problems with the operation of the furnace?
- \_\_\_ Check the fill cap (if damaged/missing, replace immediately, oil can overflow if too much water enters tank.)
- \_\_\_ If tank is aboveground, check the entire tank surface (rust, dents, etc.) for damage.
- \_\_\_ If tank is aboveground, check tank support (is it sturdy/solid?).
- \_\_\_ Check all pipeline connections and bungs (if visible).
- \_\_\_ Are there any petroleum vapors in basement/crawlspace? (If vapors are present, call DEQ.)
- \_\_\_ Check sump pump or floor drain (if present), for petroleum odors or other signs of petroleum. Call DEQ immediately if oil or vapors are detected.
- \_\_\_ Look for any signs of oil (odors, sheens on water surfaces, visible puddles of oil, etc.) on property. If oil is found, notify DEQ immediately.

My Heating Repair Professional (Name & Number): \_\_\_\_\_

My Oil Distributor (Name & Number): \_\_\_\_\_

### Please Remember:

Report petroleum odors, petroleum sheens on water surfaces, or suspected problems to DEQ.

Do not attempt to repair a tank system yourself.

## Home Heating Oil

### ABOVEGROUND & UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS

### A FACT SHEET

#### Home Heating Oil Tank:

**Definition - A home heating oil tank (aboveground or underground) stores heating oil for consumption on the premises where stored.**

## Responsibilities of a Tank Owner/Operator:

Look at your tank system. A monthly check is recommended as a preventive maintenance tool. Report sudden changes in product level or problems to a heating repair professional or your oil supplier.

Understand your tank system and how it works. You should know the tank size, age, construction material (of both tank and piping) and who to call if a repair is needed. Keep track of all deliveries.

If obvious signs of contamination are found (such as petroleum vapors, oil on property, etc.), **immediately report petroleum releases or discharges to any DEQ Regional Office listed under the Summary section of this brochure.**

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality  
<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/LandProtection/Revitalization/PetroleumProgram.aspx>  
Office of Spill Response and Remediation



## General Home Heating Oil Tank Information:

1) Any unexplained presence of water in the tank may signify a leak. There is a water-finding paste available to check for water in your tank. Some aboveground tanks have a small oil/water separator installed (a small bowl-like fixture at the bottom of the tank) to drain water from the tank. A small amount of water is often in a tank (condensation), but a sudden increase should be reported to your oil supplier. If water needs to be pumped out of a tank, be sure that the contents are properly collected, contained, and disposed, **not pumped onto the ground.**

2) Operating problems with a furnace may also signify a leak. Have a heating repair professional inspect your heating system on a regular basis. Sudden changes in oil consumption or the furnace shutting off may indicate a leak or other problem.

3) **Do not wait for your tank to leak to inspect, protect, or replace it.** Since you cannot see the condition of underground tanks, you are usually not aware of developing problems. Underground tanks are especially susceptible to problems because of their corrosive environment. The rate of corrosion varies due to a number of site conditions and type of tank construction.

4) **Tanks and lines installed aboveground allow the owner to be able to see problems quickly while they are still "small," however, it is recommended that the line be protected from accidental damage. Underground tanks and piping require more diligent professional attention.**

5) Usually, the small 275 gallon aboveground tanks should be placed inside or in a sheltered area. These tanks were often specifically designed to be used inside (shaped to be able to fit through doorways) and the steel construction was not intended for outside use. They corrode at an accelerated rate and may topple over due to severe weather conditions.

6) Aboveground tanks should be placed horizontally (with sturdy supports) on a concrete pad. You can also surround the pad with a row of mortared cinder blocks so that if any oil leaks from your tank, it will be temporarily contained for an easier cleanup.

7) Tank piping is a common source of contamination. Piping can be encased so that if a

leak occurs it is contained inside another pipe. A stop cock or valve also may be placed at the bottom of the tank to prevent a line leak from draining the tank when the tank is not used.

8) Proper installation and maintenance of the tank system is the key to protecting your property from oil contamination. Use professional tank installers and/or repair technicians to work on your tank system.

9) DEQ recommends that unused underground home heating oil tanks and associated piping be removed from the ground and properly disposed. If this is not possible, the tank should be emptied, cleaned, and then filled with inert material (sand, cement slurry) to prevent future problems (collapse). Fill pipes should be sealed or removed. Tank closure work should be conducted by a professional. Follow local codes and ordinances. Report any signs of contamination/leakage to DEQ.

10) DEQ has a reimbursement fund, called the Virginia Petroleum Storage Tank Fund (VPSTF), from which a **homeowner may be able to recover some of the costs of cleanups associated with leaking tanks. VPSTF does not reimburse tank removal, repair, or replacement costs,** only eligible cleanup costs. The financial responsibility requirement for home heating oil tanks is \$500 per occurrence. The actual amount reimbursed depends on following DEQ's directions and preapproval for conducting the cleanup and whether the costs you incur are within the usual, customary rates reimbursed by DEQ. Copies of applicable homeowner insurance documents must be provided to DEQ and may affect access to VPSTF.

### Commonly Asked Questions/Answers: What regulations apply to my home heating oil tank?

The Uniform Statewide Building and Statewide Fire Prevention Codes have requirements related to the installation, repair, and closure of home

heating oil tanks. All underground home heating oil tanks are exempt from the State and Federal Underground Storage Tank (UST) Technical Regulations. Aboveground home heating oil tanks having a capacity of 5,000 gallons or less are exempt from DEQ's Pollution Prevention requirements. Discharges of oil are prohibited by Article 11 of State Water Control Law. Always check local codes and ordinances to see if any apply.

**What do I do with a home heating oil tank that is no longer being used?** Check with your local code officials. The building code may require the removal of unused tanks. DEQ recommends that unused heating oil tanks be removed. Potential buyers are sometimes reluctant to purchase property with abandoned or improperly closed home heating oil tanks; therefore, closure may prove beneficial. Removal also eliminates a potential threat to the environment.

**If I choose to remove my home heating oil tank, what are the requirements?** You must obtain a local building permit and any inspections as required by your local building official to remove or close the tank. You do not need to contact DEQ **unless** you discover signs of a leak, spill, or contamination.

**What do I do if I discover evidence of a leak** You must immediately report evidence of a leak or spill (for example: stains on the soil, strong petroleum odors, puddles of oil, etc.) to your local DEQ Regional Office. Please refer to the end of this brochure for the addresses and telephone numbers of DEQ Regional Offices. DEQ staff will provide you with the appropriate procedures to follow. Work performed more than 24 hours prior to reporting a leak to DEQ or a local official is not eligible for reimbursement.

**What kind of companies do this sort of work?** Often, you can find them in the telephone yellow pages under "Environmental Consultants". When choosing a firm get several estimates and references.

(Fact Sheet Revision Date: 7/10/09)