



Live Assured

when you have fuel oil storage

Fuel Oil Storage Tanks How to Prevent an Expensive & Messy Cleanup

An underground or above ground fuel oil storage tank designed to hold heating fuel for furnaces can become a risk if it begins to leak. Nearly all storage tanks will eventually corrode. If your fuel oil tank has been in the ground for over 10 years, it could be leaking. Therefore, diligent tank maintenance and careful monitoring is critical.

Following are signs of a leaking tank:

- Visible signs of corrosion, especially where the pipe meets the tank body
- Stains on the walls and floors adjacent to the tank
- Vapors from the furnace
- Oily residue in nearby culverts, drainage areas, streams or lawns
- Dead vegetation in the area
- Oily taste in well-water that is contaminated

Before hiring a qualified specialist to install or remove a tank, check the contractor's references, request an estimate in advance, confirm that the contractor carries liability insurance, and that he/she is filing documentation with the state's environmental services department.

If you have a tank that is not in use, properly and legally dispose of it. To avoid any future liabilities,



hire a qualified specialist to destroy the tank structure. Contact the local or state department of environmental services for guidance. Removal involves emptying the tank, mitigating any fire hazards, and safely extracting it for recycling or disposal. State and federal regulations must also be followed with respect to contaminated soil, surface water and groundwater.

If your fuel storage tank contaminates groundwater or causes damages, you may be held liable for cleanup costs. Consider insurance coverage options:

- **Fuel Oil Distributor Coverage:** Your fuel oil service provider may offer insurance that can protect you from expensive damages.
- **Personal or Commercial Policies:** You may have the option, in some states, to purchase additional coverage for fuel pollution or liability. Your independent agent can assist you in determining options.





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Fuel Oil Storage Tank Checklist

- Check fuel use. An increase may indicate a leak.
- Keep track of consumption, and note any sudden, unexplained changes.
- Watch oil deliveries to prevent spills or overfills.
- Check for water in the tank (measure and record).
- Check oil/water separator, if present. Older models may be glass, which can shatter during freezing temperatures. Drain if needed.
- Check for signs of unexplained withered or dead vegetation in the area.
- Check that vent line is clear.
- Check that the fill gauge and overflow whistle are functioning.
- Check for signs of spills or overfills around the fill pipe or vent lines.
- Check that the furnace is operating properly.
- Check the fill cap, and replace a damaged or missing cap immediately.
- Check above ground tanks for rust, dents or other damage and to ensure it is sturdy and solid.
- Check all pipeline connections and bungs.
- Check that there are no petroleum vapors in the basement or crawl spaces.
- Check the sump pump or floor drain for petroleum odors. Look for signs of oil (odors, sheen, visible puddles) on property.

If you are uncertain or concerned about any of the above, talk to your heating service professional or a certified contractor.

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