

HOMEOWNER'S ABOVEGROUND TANK INSPECTION CHECKLIST

- Make sure the fill cap and vent cap are secured.
- Look for any leaks from the tank fittings, valves, filters, gauge or piping.
- Check for any signs of oil by the sump pump pit and floor drains.
- Inspect for any signs of spills around the tank area, fill pipe or vent lines.
- Check to see if there is an oil smell in the crawl space or basement.
- Make sure the tank vent is not clogged or restricted by ice, snow or insect nests.

\$1 MILLION OF PROTECTION

Every homeowner with an underground oil storage tank is protected by the North Carolina Leaking Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Fund (Non-Commercial) that covers the cost—up to \$1 million—for the assessment and environmental **cleanup costs** associated with tank leaks. There is no fee for this coverage.

Some restrictions apply. Please contact the Department of Environment & Natural Resources in your area for complete details.

NORTH CAROLINA Petroleum Marketers Association

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For Further Information Contact:

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GUIDE TO HEATING OIL STORAGE TANKS



This brochure has been designed to help answer the most common questions that homebuyers have about heating oil storage tanks, from regulations concerning tank abandonment to replacement options to tank protection.

SAFE STORAGE

A heating oil storage tank is a safe and convenient way to store an adequate supply of fuel to warm a home or heat water. Unlike natural gas, there is no danger of an explosion in the event of a fuel leak.

With an oil tank, homeowners pay only for the fuel they receive. They never receive estimated fuel bills or pay extra fees.

TYPES OF TANKS

There are two types of residential oil storage tanks:

- An aboveground storage tank is a tank located in a basement, crawl space or outside the house.
- An underground storage tank is a tank that's buried beneath a lawn.

The size of a tank is indicated on a heating oil company's delivery ticket. The most common tank size is 275 gallons. Other typical sizes are 280, 550 and 1,000 gallons.



North Carolina Petroleum Marketers Association

"Fueling North Carolina's Future"

<http://www.ncpma.org>

Source

¹ North Carolina Department of Environment, Health & Natural Resources, Division of Environmental Management, Groundwater Section, 5/94.

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UNDERGROUND TANKS RARELY LEAK

The chance of a home oil tank leaking is very low.

According to a study conducted by ENVIRON, an engineering consulting company, “The frequency of releases from all underground storage tanks containing home heating oil is well below 1%.”

Because heating oil tanks are not considered a threat to the environment, *there are no federal or state laws that require the removal of a properly functioning and active residential heating oil tank.*

REPLACEMENT OPTIONS

The life expectancies of buried oil tanks vary, depending on the materials used in building the tank, how the tank was installed and the composition of the surrounding soil. Most tanks last for many decades without problems. Properly installed and maintained, today’s average heating oil tank can last for as long as 50 years.

The most popular option is to replace a buried tank with an aboveground tank, typically installed in the crawl space and vented to the outside. These tanks are normally smaller (275 gallons) and can be customized for hard-to-fit places. Aboveground tanks can also be installed outside the home and hidden in a tank enclosure.

An alternative is to replace an old, bare steel, buried tank with a modern underground tank. Modern tanks are made



from corrosion-resistant materials such as fiberglass, and they have a stronger wall construction than older tanks, providing further protection against leaks.

GUIDELINES FOR REMOVAL

If a homeowner decides to replace an underground tank with an aboveground tank, the buried tank must be either removed or legally abandoned.

Although not required by law, the removal of an inactive tank is recommended by the North Carolina Department of Environment & Natural Resources. If this is not possible, the tank should be emptied, cleaned and then filled with an inert material, such as sand, slurry or foam. This is done as a safety measure because a tank that is not in use tends to deteriorate quickly, which could result in its collapse.

Before proceeding with any tank abandonment, homeowners should contact the local fire inspector to ask about local codes that may affect the abandonment or removal of an underground tank. Ordinances vary from town to town.



HOW TO TELL IF AN OIL TANK HAS BEEN ABANDONED PROPERLY

The best resource to contact is a local heating oil company, who can check the tank to see if it has been abandoned properly. No digging is necessary.