

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Land Management Administration • Oil Control Program

1800 Washington Boulevard • Suite 620 • Baltimore Maryland 21230-1719
410-537-3442 • 800-633-6101 x3442 • 410-537-3092 (fax) • www.mde.state.md.us

Home Heating Oil Storage Tanks

Fuel oil, also known as heating oil, is an excellent heating and hot water source for homes and commercial businesses. Some benefits of fuel oil include: the user can shop price and supplier; oil has an excellent fire safety record; hot water capacity exceeds many other forms of energy; and with properly tuned equipment oil has a very low air emission. Over the past couple of years the Maryland Department of the Environment has seen an increase in leaks from underground storage tanks (USTs) used to store heating oil at private homes. These failures are mainly due to corrosion of the steel in the storage tanks. The average operational life of a plain steel underground storage tank is 15 to 20 years. If you own an UST that is older than 20 years, you should consider having it tested or replaced.

Preventing the release of heating oil into the ground is very important to the environment. This is especially true in communities where drinking water is obtained from private domestic wells. It has been found that these wells could become contaminated from a release of oil. It is also widely known that oil spills of any kind can harm our environment.

Facts About Residential Heating Oil Storage Tanks

Active UST systems at private homes with a capacity of 1,100 gallons or less are not required to be upgraded or tested by any regulation or law. We rely on the tank owner to ensure that their tank is operational and not leaking. Although not required by regulation, the Department strongly recommends the tank owner either test the tank for tightness or replace the tank if the system is over 20 years of age. The oil supplier can assist with these issues.

If an UST is taken out of service at a private residence, it must be properly abandoned by a Maryland-certified UST remover or technician. Abandonment can be accomplished by removing all liquid from the tank and either: (1) removing the tank and all piping; or (2) filling the tank in place with sand, gravel, or a concrete slurry mix. All piping must be removed or capped. Unused aboveground storage tanks (ASTs) must be removed from the property and should never be used for underground storage of heating oil. The reason for proper abandonment is to prevent the release of product and the structural failure of the former storage tank system.

The tank owner and contractor must report any discovered release as required by Maryland law and regulations.

If your residential UST system has a capacity of 1,101 gallons or greater; or regardless of tank size when the tank is at a commercial establishment, the tank owner must:

1. Register the UST with the Department.
2. Properly mark the fill pipe with the tank capacity and product stored.
3. Test the tank and piping for tightness at 15 years of age and every 5 years thereafter.

We encourage you to contact the Maryland Department of the Environment at 1-800-633-6101, ext. 3442 for additional information, or see the following page detailing information available on our website. Your oil supplier can also be an excellent resource for information.

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Oil Control Program Website Information for Homeowners

The Oil Control Program has produced several Fact Sheets and other sources of information to assist homeowners in managing their home heating oil tanks, both above and below ground. This information is available at anytime on our website at <http://www.mde.state.md.us/>. Once on the MDE homepage, follow these directions to navigate to the Oil Control Program homepage and several of the Fact Sheets.

- At the bottom of the page under the *Land* section, select *Oil Control* from the drop down list, this will take you to the Oil Control Program homepage.
- Next select the *Fact Sheets, Publications & Reports* link, which will take you to a listing of various information sources.
- The direct link is:
http://www.mde.state.md.us/Programs/LandPrograms/Oil_Control/FactsheetsPublications/index.asp.

The following list is recommended information for homeowners. Each list is also a link to the particular Fact Sheet.

How should I maintain my tank?

- [Inspection of Home Heating Oil Above Ground Storage Tanks](#)
- [Recommended Practices for Owners of Home Heating Oil Storage Tank Systems](#)
- [Underground Storage Tank Compliance Outline](#)

What if I need or want to remove my tank?

- [Underground Storage Tank Removal \(Residential Fuel Oil Tanks\)](#)
- [Underground Storage Tank Closure-in-Place](#)

What if there is a release?

- [Heating Oil Release](#)
- [Homeowner Guidance for Residential Underground Heating Oil Tank Failure Assessment](#)
- [Oil Spill Contractors](#)

What if there are concerns about my well?

- [GAC System Fact Sheet](#)
- [Testing Laboratories](#)
- [Testing Laboratories by City/County](#)

MDE Residential Reimbursement Program

- [Residential Heating Oil Reimbursement Fact Sheet](#)
- [Residential Heating Oil Reimbursement Application](#)
- [Residential Heating Oil Reimbursement Fund Form](#)