



# Spill prevention for your home heating oil tank

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**P**roper care and maintenance of your home’s heating or fuel oil tank, lines and furnace can reduce your chance of being faced with costly property damage and environmental problems.

Heating oil spills in homes can:

- contaminate drinking water wells, ground water, and soil;
- foul septic systems, requiring that they be replaced;
- cause odor and vapor problems in the home; and
- enter sumps that can contaminate storm/sanitary sewers, surface water, and drainage ditches.

Each of these problems can cost a homeowner thousands of dollars to correct. The following tips can help you avoid costly problems associated with leaks and spills from your home heating oil system.

### “To do’s” before and during the heating season

- Keep oil lines between the tank and the furnace either under concrete or in protective tubing.
- Keep all pipe connections clean and tight.
- Measure and monitor fuel usage and compare it to past seasons.

- Discuss your fuel needs, the delivery protocols, and spill protocols with your fuel oil delivery company.
- Know how to properly measure your tank and calculate the volume in the tank.
- Know when and how much to order from your fuel oil delivery company.
- Keep the fill pipe accessible and visible for the delivery company.
- Keep the vent line clear of any snow, ice, or insect nests to prevent pressurizing.

### Things to consider

- Check the condition of the tank and lines. The life of your tank depends on many variables, such as the tank construction, tank installation, soil and ground water conditions, and maintenance of the tank.
- Consider upgrading your tank system or converting to an alternative fuel.
- If you take your tank out of service, remove the tank and lines completely. Many fuel oil delivery companies have delivered heating oil to homeowners’ fill pipes that had no tanks attached to the other end, resulting in spills and damage that cost thousands of dollars.

- Check the stability of the legs and the ground beneath your above-ground tank. Many tanks have buckled or tipped due to instabilities.
- Look for signs of spillage near the fill and vent pipes. Stained soil and rock or distressed vegetation could indicate that a spill has occurred. If you discover a fuel oil spill, immediately report it to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) by calling the Minnesota Duty Officer at (651) 649-5451 or (800) 422-0798. MPCA staff will offer you advice on how to best correct the problem and clean up the pollution.

### **For more information**

For more information on spill prevention, cleanup and disposal, call the MPCA at (651) 296-6300 or (800) 657-3864 and ask for a member of the Emergency Response Team or go to the Emergency Response fact sheets page at

[www.pca.state.mn.us/cleanup/pubs/ertpubs.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/cleanup/pubs/ertpubs.html) on the internet.