



# Residential Underground Oil Tanks

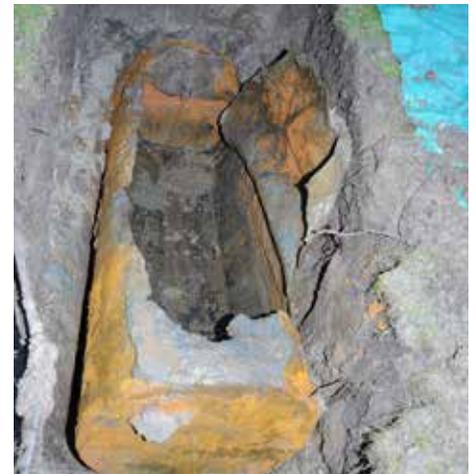
Do you have an underground oil tank? This fact sheet provides helpful information on how to remove your underground tank, or maintain a tank to prevent future impacts on the environment.

## Did You Know?

- Underground oil tanks have an average life span of 15–25 years. Older tanks can corrode and begin to leak hazardous materials into the environment.
- A small leak can have far-reaching impacts. Contamination of the soil and groundwater can occur and even pose a fire and explosion hazard under certain conditions. The impact of a leak may violate local, provincial or federal laws and result in fines. Clean-up can be complicated in replacing an oil tank and supply lines, and in removing the contaminated soil. It could even require replacing part of your home's foundation and/or treating groundwater.
- Oil floats on water, so every time it rains, oil may make its way to the surface. A pinhole leak could lead to oil leaking into a neighbour's property, storm drains, and eventually into bodies of water causing harm to fresh water and marine ecosystems.
- The BC Fire Code (Section 4.3.16.1(1)) requires landowners follow proper engineering practices in the management of residential heating oil storage tanks.
- Impacts of a leaky tank may reduce property values and the cost of clean-up could be more than your home is worth.
- Insurance may not cover the full cost of an expensive clean-up, or the damages from a leak on your property.
- If a leak has been discovered, you must report it to the Victoria Fire Department. All fuel leaks or spills over 100 litres and/or that enter a waterway must be reported to the Province's Environmental Emergency Program (EEP) at 1.800.663.3456.

## How to know you have an underground oil tank?

- Look for:
  - a cast iron pipe protruding from the ground
  - fill-pipes on the exterior of the home or sticking out of the ground
  - fuel lines inside the home
  - a metal pipe cap close to the front or backyard
  - a sunken area on your lawn
- Check the property database at the Victoria Fire Department. It may have information on your individual property but does not have site plans.
- Contact an oil tank contractor to survey your property for the existence of a buried tank.



*Excavated oil tank*

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Victoria Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division

T 250.920.3360

E [vfd@victoria.ca](mailto:vfd@victoria.ca)

1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE, VICTORIA, BC V8W 1P6 | [victoria.ca/fire](http://victoria.ca/fire)

## How to Maintain Your Underground Oil Tank

- Keep the tank full over the summer to minimize water condensation which can corrode the tank inside and make leaks hard to spot.
- Ensure the fuel supply line is protected from foot traffic and has a protective sleeve around the fuel line.
- Monitor the connections in the fuel line. Look for leaks around the fuel filter shut-off valves and the furnace connection.
- Check the tank after each fuel delivery for any leaks or concerns.
- Replace the oil filter each year.
- Monitor your fuel usage on your oil bills. An above normal consumption may mean a possible fuel leak.
- Be aware of the age of your underground oil tank. The average life span is 15–25 years.
- Keep a spill kit handy to help deal with small leaks before a contracted professional is on site.

## What To Do in the Event of a Spill or Leak

- Eliminate or minimize the risk of fire by removing any nearby combustible items and turning off furnace, baseboard heating, and fireplaces.
- Ensure the leaking oil is contained as best as possible with a pail, rags, or absorbent materials. Do not dispose oil down your drains, toilet, or storm drains.
- If oil enters into a drain or onto a public road, or if there is contamination of soil or groundwater, contact the Province's Environmental Emergency Program (EEP) at 1.800.663.3456.
- All fuel leaks or spills over 100 litres and/or that enter a waterway must also be reported.
- To clean up the spill and properly dispose of recovered oil, contact a qualified contractor.



*Corroded underground oil tank*



*Excavated oil tank*

## Steps to Remove a Residential Underground Oil Tank

**Step 1: Once you have confirmed an underground oil tank is on your property, hire an oil tank contractor or a registered professional engineer to remove it.**

- Obtain at least three quotes to remove the oil tank.
- Ensure the contractor or engineer you select has:
  - an understanding of the BC Fire Code and Environmental Management Act regulations regarding underground oil tank removals and oil spills
  - experience with underground oil tank removals
  - liability insurance and a business licence to operate in the City of Victoria
  - WorkSafeBC coverage
  - obtained the required permit\* from the City of Victoria to remove the tank.

**\*Permit applications are available at City Hall or at the Victoria Fire Department Headquarters at 1234 Yates Street.**

- Obtain a written contract with a cost estimate based on property conditions, which clearly states the work to be done. Observe the process, taking notes and photographs to document the work.

- **Note:** Upon removal of the tank, and before backfilling, a Victoria Fire Prevention officer must inspect the excavation.

**Step 2: Measure and manage any contamination.**

Your contractor must have soil samples tested by a qualified laboratory. If soil contamination is found, ensure the contractor or engineer coordinates the remediation program with the Ministry of Environment.

**Step 3: Obtain a final report from the contractor and keep for your records.**

A final report from the contractor or engineer should include:

- shipping records regarding recycling or disposing of the tank, piping residues, soil and fuel
- an accurate site plan indicating where the tank was located
- colour photographs taken during the removal, inspection and clean-up, which clearly display the site and tank condition
- contamination measurement results, and documentation of any clean-up done.