



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 to 25 years. Older tanks can corrode and leak hazardous materials into the environment.
- A small leak can have far-reaching impacts. Contamination of the soil and groundwater may violate local, provincial or federal laws and result in fines.
- Cleanup can be complicated and costly, affecting yours and neighbouring homes and properties.
- An oil leak may make its way to storm drains and eventually into bodies of water causing harm to fresh water and marine ecosystems.
- The BC Fire Code requires landowners follow proper engineering practices in the management of residential heating oil storage tanks.
- Insurance may not cover the full cost of an expensive cleanup, 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 at 1.800.663.3456.

How to Find Out If You Have an Underground Oil Tank

- Look for visual signs like vent or fill pipes on your property or a sunken area on your lawn.
- Hire a professional to conduct a ground-penetrating radar scan.
- Contact the Victoria Fire Department for recent records. Search your address in [Vic Map](#) and check the property report for any historical permit cards for your property.

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 it.
- Monitor the connections in the fuel line. Look for leaks around the shut-off valves and the furnace connection.
- Check the tank after each fuel delivery for any leaks or concerns.



Underground oil tank fill pipe used to refill the tank with oil.

- 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 to 25 years.
- Keep a spill kit handy to help deal with small leaks before professional help arrives.

What To Do in the Event of a Spill or Leak

- Minimize the risk of fire by removing any nearby combustible items and turning off the furnace, baseboards 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.
- Contact the Province's Environmental Emergency Program at 1.800.663.3456 if:
 - oil enters a drain or onto a public road
 - there is soil or groundwater contamination
 - the leak or spill is more than 100 litres
 - the oil leaks into a waterway
- Contact a qualified environmental professional to clean up the spill and help assess possible contamination.



Corroded underground oil tank.



Excavated oil tank.

Removing a Residential Underground Oil Tank

Oil tank removal can be complicated and must be done following proper engineering practices.

Removing an underground oil tank is regulated by the BC Fire Code and Environmental Management Act.

Contact a qualified environmental professional.

- They can help with removal and assess whether any environmental contamination is present and what level of measurement or remediation is required.
- Obtain at least three quotes.
- Get a contract with cost estimates that states the scope of work.
- Observe the process, take notes and photos to document the work.
- Obtain a final report including tank, soil and contamination disposal information, site plan and photos plus any cleanup measurements and results.

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

Contact the Fire Prevention division to schedule an inspection.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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