



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **DEP Advises Homeowners to Inspect Home Heating Oil Tanks and Take Precautions to Prevent Spills, Leaks**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today advised residents to inspect and assess home heating oil tanks before the upcoming heating season to avoid leaks or spills that can be prevented.

Nearly one in five Pennsylvania households uses heating oil to stay warm in the winter. Owners of home heating oil tanks should inspect indoor and outdoor tanks for potential problems. Leaking heating oil tanks can contaminate drinking water and soils, diminish indoor air quality, create the potential for fires and explosions, and subject tank owners to very expensive cleanups, which may not be covered by homeowner insurance policies. With proper tank management, spills and leaks can be avoided. Tank owners who think their oil tank may have a problem should immediately contact their oil company for help.

DEP encourages home heating oil tank owners to routinely inspect the exterior of the tank and all attached equipment and follow these tips:

- For safety reasons, always assume the tank contains at least some oil.
- Check for signs of rusting on the tank and its structural supports.
- Examine the tank's fill line and feed line to the furnace for leaks.
- Check for signs that the vent line is clogged by debris such as spider or bee nests.
- Recognize that wet spots or odors near the tank may signal a problem.
- Never tip over or empty a tank onto the ground.
- Enlist a professional to perform maintenance or alterations to a heating oil tank system.

Tank owners should make certain that the home address is clearly visible and the tank's fill line is clearly marked when heating oil is delivered. If a tank owner cannot be home when heating oil is delivered, mark the fill pipe with a red flag or marker and inform the oil company of its location. Residents should ensure that any disconnected fill pipes that remain above the ground are permanently sealed and cannot be opened.

If a leak or spill occurs, tank owners should do the following:

- Find the source of the spill or leak and stop or contain the release, using absorbent material like cat litter, sawdust, peat moss or newspaper to stop the release from spreading.
- Call the heating oil distributor to remove as much oil from the tank as is necessary to prevent further release.
- Immediately notify the municipality and DEP.
- If heating oil odors are getting into the house, ventilate affected areas, and close off unaffected areas.
- Contact environmental professionals to begin the cleanup.
- Keep detailed, accurate records.

- Contact the insurance provider.

For more information on home heating oil tanks, visit the new Home Heating Oil web page on DEP's website at [www.dep.pa.gov/homeheatingoil](http://www.dep.pa.gov/homeheatingoil) or call DEP's Division of Storage Tanks at 717-772-5599.

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