Oil Tanks

Residential heating oil tanks can be either underground or aboveground and are used to store oil for heating the residence on the property. Many residents have switched from oil to natural gas or electricity as a means to heat their homes. Sometimes when this happens the homeowner does not know how to properly deal with the "unused" heating oil tank. Neglecting to take care of an unused tank can cause serious problems for the homeowner. For Instance:

- Tanks can develop holes and release heating oil into the soil.
- Corrosion can cause underground tanks to deteriorate, making cave-in a possibility.
- A tank left on the property may cause delays or problems when trying to sell the home or property.

The City of Richland Fire Prevention Division enforces the International Fire Codes that relate to unused residential heating oil tanks. Read further for more information regarding these codes and how to obtain a permit for any work done.

What should you do if you have an unused heating oil tank on your property?

1. Find out where the tank is located (if it's buried).
2. Find out what's in the tank - unused oil, water residue, or other chemicals.
3. Obtain a permit from the fire department.
4. Have any unused oil pumped from the tank.
5. Have your tank removed (RECOMMENDED) or:
6. Have your tank abandoned in place, filling it with the approved inert mixture. EXCEPTION: Residential heating oil tanks of 1,100 gallons or less, providing the fill line is permanently capped or plugged, below grade, to prevent refilling of tank.

Who can do the work and how much will it cost?

The codes do not require you to hire a licensed company to do the job, but it is recommended because of the difficulty often encountered. Look in your telephone directory under "oils- waste" or "recycling services" for companies to pump your tank of residual oil or to clean them before removal. For removal, look under "tanks" in the phone book. Your local directory may differ in the headings. Some contractors may provide all services necessary. Make sure that the company doing the work is experienced and bonded or insured to do the work. The costs involved will vary depending on the size, the location and accessibility of the tank. Get price quotes from several different companies. Tank disposal must be done in accordance with local regulations.

Sometimes unwanted oil may be donated to charitable organizations in your area. Check with local heating oil companies or your area recycling program to

find out if such a program exists.

▶ What codes regulate your residential heating oil tank?

The City of Richland Fire Prevention Division enforces the International Fire Code that relate to unused residential heating oil tanks. This code may be found in section 3404.2.13.1.4. It includes the requirements necessary to remove or abandon in place tanks and related piping.

A no-cost permit must be obtained prior to work commencing on tanks. Application may be made by the owner or the person contracted to perform the work.

- It is strongly recommended that all unused tanks be removed from the ground if feasible.

Removing tanks from the ground allows easier visual inspection of the surrounding soil if this is required by other agencies and prevents the tank from possibly being used for other purposes if it isn't properly abandoned in place.

Another option, when removal is not feasible, is to abandon the tank in place. This is done by filling the tank with an inert mixture of concrete and an additive. This is normally done by a contractor.

▶ What if your tank has been leaking?

If you know your tank has been leaking heating oil, it is your responsibility to have the problem mitigated, the soil sampled and the contamination cleaned up. For more information about this, call your regional Department of Ecology office. The number for Eastern Washington is 509.456.6364 (Spokane).

A permit can be obtained by visiting the **Administrative Office at 1000 George Washington Way, Richland, WA or for questions call 509.942.7703.**