



# Home Heating Oil Tanks

## What Do I Do With an Out of Service Tank?

Section 5704.2.13.1.3 and 5704.2.13.1.4 of the 2012 International Fire Code requires that tanks and piping serving heating oil tanks which have been out of service for a period of one year or more be REMOVED from the ground or ABANDONED in place.

## Is a Permit Required?

Section 105.7.8 of the 2012 International Fire Code requires that a permit be obtained to remove, abandon, place temporarily out of service or otherwise dispose of a heating oil tank. A permit is required from the Olympia Fire Department prior to decommissioning or removal of an underground heating oil tank. Permits are issued to the contractor performing the work. The City of Olympia Fire Marshal strongly recommends that that residential oil tank removal and abandonment be carried out by a Washington State Licensed Contractor.

## How Does My Contractor Apply For a Permit?

Permit applications can be obtained at City Hall, Community Planning and Development (CP&D) located at 601 Fourth Avenue E, Olympia WA 98501. The phone number is 360.753.8314.

Complete permit applications will include:

- A permit application, indicating if you would like to remove or abandon the tank. This can be obtained at CP&D
- The location of the residence
- Two copies of the site plan showing the location of the tank in respect to the house and property lines. (dimensions are required)
- The size of the tank in gallons
- The last known contents of the tank

A permit fee is calculated based on a percentage of the overall cost of the work being performed. To determine the specific cost of your tank permit, contact Community Planning and Development at 360.753.8314.

Most permit application reviews take approximately 5-10 working days.

## What is Required of the Tank Contractor When REMOVING My Tank?

1. Pump all remaining oil from your tank
2. Clean out any sludge in the bottom of the tank and dispose of at an approved facility
3. Excavate down to top of tank
4. Remove or cap all lines
5. Remove potentially explosive vapors from the tank (inert with dry ice)
6. Remove the tank from the ground

**IMPORTANT: A FIRE DEPARTMENT INSPECTION IS REQUIRED AFTER THE TANK IS PULLED FROM THE GROUND BUT PRIOR TO THE HOLE BEING FILLED OR THE TANK BEING REMOVED FROM THE SITE. IT CAN TAKE UP TO 3 DAYS TO SCHEDULE AN INSPECTION SO BE PREPARED AND CALL IN ADVANCE. 360.753.8348**

7. Take soil samples to provide proof to the homeowner that the tank site is clean
8. Properly dispose of the tank at a designated and approved facility
9. Backfill the hole
10. Remember to keep tank removal or abandonment permits for your records.

## Should I Have My Tank Abandoned in Place Rather Than Removed?

This is a popular option for residential tanks, especially if removal isn't possible. But before choosing this alternative, consider the future of your property. Potential buyers or lenders may require you to remove the tank. It is the strong recommendation of the Olympia Fire Department that a heating oil tank be removed rather than abandon in place. Why?

According to the Department of Ecology Report R-TC-92-117:

*"If the tank has leaked, it will be easier to find and clean up any contaminated soil. Often, home buyers and lending institutions require assurance that the property is not contaminated before agreeing to complete property transactions. The best way to provide that assurance is to remove the tank and sample the soil in the pit. Tank removal allows visual inspection of the area under the tank and more accurate soil sampling."*

## What is required of the tank contractor when ABANDONING my tank?

1. Pump all remaining oil from your tank
2. Clean out any sludge in the bottom of the tank and dispose of properly
3. Remove or cap all lines
4. Take soil samples to provide proof to the homeowner that the tank site is clean
5. Fill the tank with an inert solid material, such as a weak cement slurry, sand, or foam

**IMPORTANT! A FIRE DEPARTMENT INSPECTION IS REQUIRED AFTER THE TANK HAS BEEN FILLED WITH SLURRY BUT PRIOR TO THE TANK BEING CLOSED AND COVERED. IT CAN TAKE UP TO 3 DAYS TO SCHEDULE AN INSPECTION SO BE PREPARED AND CALL IN ADVANCE. 360.753.8348**

6. Plug or cap all openings in the tank
7. Backfill the hole
8. Remember to keep tank removal or abandonment permits for your records.

## **What Do I Do if My Tank Has Leaked into the Surrounding Soil?**

In most cases where a tank has leaked, only the soil near the tank is affected. Sometimes, however, the heating oil may also have contaminated groundwater or surface water. Under the State Model Toxics Control Act, the tank owner may be held liable for damage caused by a leaking tank. It is the tank has leaked it is the homeowner's responsibility to:

- Evaluate the extent of contamination through soil sampling
- Determine if it is a threat to human health and the environment
- Clean up any contamination caused by the leak.
- When the cleanup is completed, your cleanup contractor should give you a copy of the cleanup report.

**IMPORTANT! The home owner should keep the written cleanup report for future reference by lenders and potential buyers.**

## **Should I Report the Leak to the Department of Ecology?**

Cleanup reports of minor leaks from residential heating oil tanks do not need to be sent to the Department of Ecology. They do not track or report on these cleanups.

If your heating oil has caused any of the following situations, you must report the leak to the appropriate Ecology regional office within 90 days.

Dept of Ecology, Southwest Region PO Box 47775, Olympia, WA 98504-7775. 360.407.6300

- The heating oil has reached adjoining properties
- The heating oil has affected a well or groundwater
- The heating oil has caused vapor problems in nearby buildings
- The heating oil has pooled on the surface of the ground
- The heating oil has contamination

## For More Information

For further help and information, please contact the Pollution Liability Insurance Agency at 1.800.822.3905 or visit them at [www.plia.wa.gov](http://www.plia.wa.gov). Ecology's [Residential Heating Oil Tanks focus sheet](#) also provides helpful information.

For specific questions regarding the tank removal, contact the Olympia Fire Department, Fire Marshal's office at **360.753.8348**.