

*The Virginia Guide to:*



**HEATING OIL  
STORAGE  
TANKS**





You probably don't think about your heating oil tank that often, but without one, your Oilheat system simply could not function. Because your tank is so crucial to your home comfort, we thought it important to create this booklet, which includes up-to-date information on types of Oilheat storage tanks, regulations, testing and replacement. We hope you find this guide helpful.

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## Customer Satisfaction

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Research shows that homeowners prefer the fuel they are familiar with, and many Virginians already have a preference for Oilheat. In fact, in a recent survey, **over 95% of Oilheat consumers gave it the “thumbs up,”** citing personal service as one of its strongest benefits.

Homeowners and businesses know they can depend on their favorite fuel’s safe and secure on-site storage with today’s rugged tanks. They enjoy complete comfort and peace of mind along with an ample, uninterrupted supply.



# Safe and Efficient Storage

Having an oil tank on your property puts you in control of your comfort. The storage tank allows you to have an adequate supply of heating oil ready for immediate use with the arrival of cold weather. You pay only for the fuel that's delivered, with no estimates or questions. And you can choose from many oil dealers and delivery options, such as automatic delivery. By tracking the weather and your past fuel consumption, your dealer can refill the tank before the fuel level gets too low. You never need to think about it.

Advances in technology have resulted in the manufacture of tanks made from corrosion-resistant materials such as fiberglass and protected steel. Properly installed and maintained, today's oil tanks can last for decades.

## Environmental Considerations



According to a major national study, the chance of a leak from an underground oil tank is less than one-quarter of 1%.\* The Virginia DEQ has stated that of the reported leaks, "often these heating oil tanks do not impact a receptor (e.g. drinking water well or stream) and have a minimal impact on the environment." In fact, the DEQ has revised the procedures for responding to discharges from small heating oil ASTs and USTs (1,000-gallon capacity or less) to allow for more flexibility at sites with a minimal impact on the environment.

\* *Environ Corporation, "Analysis of the Potential Hazards Posed by No. 2 Fuel Oil Contained in Underground Storage Tanks"*



# Types of Tanks

There are two kinds of residential oil storage tanks. An aboveground storage tank may be located outside of a house, or it may be in a basement or garage. An underground storage tank is buried beneath the ground. The size of a tank can be determined by checking an oil delivery ticket. Common tank sizes are 275 gallons for an aboveground tank and 290, 500 and 1,000 gallons for an underground tank.



*Aboveground  
Indoor/Outdoor  
Single Walled  
Steel Oil Tank*



*Underground  
Single or Double  
Walled Tank*



*2-in-1 Indoor Safety  
Tank — galvanized  
steel tank over  
polyethylene  
inner tank*



*Aboveground  
Indoor/Outdoor  
Fiberglass Tank*

## Tank Talk



You can protect your tank, extend its life span and beautify your home with a variety of tank enclosures. Your Oilheat dealer can help you choose the functional and attractive option that is best for you, such as:

- **Tank Tubs:** Vinyl, double-walled secondary containment tubs protect aboveground outdoor tanks from rain, snow and winter wind chill.
- **Tank Covers:** One-piece, vinyl, custom-built outdoor oil tank covers protect your tank from snow, rain and temperature extremes.
- **Tank Trays and Tank Pans:** Available in a variety of sizes, trays and pans offer additional protection to your property.
- **Tank Alarms:** Float sensors are installed on the tank leg to alert you in the event of a leak. The alarm bell/siren can be installed within hearing distance elsewhere inside your home.



Consider replacing outdated units with double-walled tanks and pipes for additional protection for you and your home.

Use only professional tank installers and/or repair technicians to ensure proper installation and maintenance, and to guard against spills and overfilling.

When closing an underground oil tank, discuss your options with your Oilheat dealer.

While removal is not required by Virginia state law, you should remove and dispose of the tank or arrange for proper abandonment, which includes having the equipment emptied, cleaned and filled with an inert material to ensure future stability. Again, all work on your tank should be done by professionals for the safety of your home, your property and your family.



## Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

If your oil tank is underground, you probably don't worry about it much. In fact, if your underground tank is less than twenty years old, the chance of a leak is very rare because today's tanks are constructed using state-of-the-art technology and materials. However, it is true



that older tanks have a higher probability of failure because the metals can corrode over a period of time when exposed to the unique minerals and soil found on your property.

# Virginia Petroleum Storage Tank Fund (VPSTF)

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Virginia provides additional protection for homeowners and businesses in the rare case of a petroleum release from a tank. The Virginia Petroleum Storage Tank Fund (VPSTF) is a state legislated reimbursement fund from which you can recover the costs of cleaning up an oil leak.

## What this means to you:

In the unlikely event of a petroleum release from a tank, you are protected from high remediation costs. As the homeowner, your financial responsibility requirement is only \$500.\* The fund covers all pre-approved, eligible clean-up costs above your deductible to \$1,000,000. Your local Oilheat dealer may include payment of this deductible as part of their service or tank maintenance contracts. (Ask your dealer for an explanation of their company's policies.) Tank removal may be covered if included as part of the approved Corrective Action Plan. Revenues for the fund come from a state fee of one-fifth of one cent per gallon (or up to three-fifths of one cent if the fund drops below three million dollars) on heating

\* The corrective action financial responsibility requirement is \$500 for USTs and ASTs used for storing heating oil for consumption on the premises where the tank is located (i.e., the oil is not offered for sale).





oil and other regulated petroleum products. The fees collected are used primarily for reimbursement of costs incurred in cleaning up a petroleum release from commercial or residential storage tanks.

To receive reimbursement from the VPSTF, you must be sure to follow all DEQ directions, have the clean-up pre-approved, and submit all applicable homeowner insurance documents. The actual amount received will be based upon the usual, customary rates reimbursed by DEQ. Be sure to contact your DEQ Regional Office as soon as an oil leak is discovered, and request information about clean-up requirements and reimbursement through the VPSTF.



*For more information on reimbursement from the VPSTF, visit <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/LandProtectionRevitalization/PetroleumProgram.aspx>.*



## Aboveground Tank Inspection



If your basement or aboveground tank can be inspected or is visible, your local Oilheat dealer can check your tank during your annual tune-up. You can also visually inspect the tank yourself. Watch for these signs: rust, weeps, wet spots or excessive dents on the tank's surface ... signs of leakage around the filter, valves, gauge or piping ... dead vegetation in the tank fill area ... an oil scent in the basement ... spills or overfills around the tank or on the floor ... or a loose fill cap or vent cap. (See the Virginia DEQ Recommended Homeowner's Monthly Tank Checklist on page 10.)

## Underground Tank Testing

Frequently, a homebuyer or seller is requested by a lender or insurance company to have an underground oil tank tested. That's why it's a good idea, if you're selling your home, to test your tank **before** entering into a purchase agreement with a buyer. This will enhance the marketability of your property and avoid confusion and unnecessary delays during the real estate transaction. **Even if you are not selling your home, if you have an older underground tank you may want to consider testing for greater peace of mind.**

Traditionally, underground oil tanks can be tested for tightness, or soil borings can be performed around the tank to check for any sign of leaks. Advances in technology now allow for non-pressurized tests, using specialized equipment,



that can distinguish between a leak in the piping and a leak in the tank ... eliminate the need to fill tanks and the danger of oil spilling into the ground ... and do not damage the tank, with results available in as little as two hours. To avoid confusion and to get a reliable assessment, consult with your local Oilheat dealer and make sure that the work is conducted by a reliable, experienced tank tester.



## Your Replacement Options

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There are **several economical options** for replacing older or leaking tanks. Aboveground, you can have a **new double walled safety tank installed in your basement** ... or choose a **new safety tank for outside your home**. Today's oil tanks are manufactured to the highest standards – offering economical, durable, safe, compact and problem-free storage. Some are lined with rust- and corrosion-resistant materials such as fiberglass, polyethylene and polypropylene. Plus, they're often smaller and weigh less than older models. Today's aboveground tanks are relatively small (275 gallons) and they can be customized for hard-to-fit places. For example, a vertical tank can be installed in small or unusual-shaped spaces in a basement or garage.

Many Oilheat dealers offer attractive coverings for your outdoor tank to protect it from the elements and provide secondary containment. They are available in a variety of colors to match your house's siding. (See page 4 for details.)

You can also replace a buried tank with a modern, **corrosion-resistant underground tank**. With today's technology, a new tank can be isolated from the ground, making it worry-free.

## Is It Time to Check Your Tank?

The key factors in determining your tank's life span are the thickness and type of material used to fabricate the tank, the quality of the installation, and the type of soil in which the tank is buried, if underground. Depending on these factors, that time span can be less than 20 years from the time of installation.



### *Virginia DEQ*

## Homeowner's Tank Checklist

- Check fuel use (an increase may indicate a tank or line leak). Keep track of your oil consumption (note any sudden, unexplained change).
- Check for water in the tank (record measurement, if taken).
- Check oil/water separator if present: newer models are metal, older are glass (which can shatter during freezing temperatures). Drain if needed. If you are unsure, talk to your heating professional.
- Watch for signs of unexplained dead or withered vegetation in the area.
- Make sure the vent line is clear.



- ❑ Check that the fill gauge (if one is installed) is functioning.
- ❑ Check that the overflow whistle (if one is installed) is functioning.
- ❑ Look for signs of spills or overfills around the fill pipe or vent lines.
- ❑ Check for problems with the operation of the furnace.
- ❑ Check the fill cap (if damaged/missing, replace immediately; oil can overflow if too much water enters tank).
- ❑ If tank is aboveground, check the entire tank surface (rust, dents, etc.) for damage.
- ❑ If tank is aboveground, check whether tank support is sturdy/solid.
- ❑ Check all pipeline connections and bungs (if visible).
- ❑ Be aware of any petroleum vapors in basement/crawlspace. (If vapors are present, call your Oilheat dealer.)
- ❑ Check sump pump or floor drain (if present): are there petroleum odors or any signs of petroleum? Call your Oilheat dealer immediately if either is detected.
- ❑ Look for any signs of oil (odors, sheens on water surfaces, visible puddles of oil, etc.) on property. If oil is found, notify your Oilheat dealer immediately.

**Please Remember:**  
Report petroleum odors, petroleum sheens on water surfaces or suspected problems immediately to your local Oilheat provider to ensure the safe, efficient and proper operation of your system.



## **We hope you found this booklet helpful.**

As you have read, Oilheat storage tanks are, for the most part, worry-free. However, should an emergency occur, or if you have any questions, comments or even complaints, please refer to the telephone numbers below.

## **Helpful Telephone Numbers**

### **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality**

#### **Central Office**

629 East Main Street  
P.O. Box 1105  
Richmond, VA 23218  
(804) 698-4000  
(800) 592-5482 (Toll Free in VA)

#### **Northern Regional Office:**

*Cities: Alexandria,  
Arlington, Falls Church,  
Fairfax, Fredericksburg*  
13901 Crown Court  
Woodbridge, VA 22193  
(703) 583-3800

#### **Valley Regional Office**

*Cities: Buena Vista,  
Charlottesville,  
Harrisonburg, Lexington,  
Staunton, Waynesboro,  
Winchester*  
4411 Early Rd.  
P.O. Box 3000  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801  
(540) 574-7800

#### **Southwest Regional Office**

*Cities: Bristol, Galax,  
Norton*  
355-A Deadmore Street  
Abingdon, VA 24210  
(276) 676-4800

#### **Blue Ridge Regional Office/Roanoke**

*Cities: Bedford, Clifton  
Forge, Covington,  
Martinsville, Radford,  
Roanoke, Salem*  
3019 Peters Creek Rd.  
Roanoke, VA 24019  
(540) 562-6700

#### **Blue Ridge Regional Office/Lynchburg**

*Cities: Danville, Lynchburg*  
7705 Timberlake Rd.  
Lynchburg, VA 24502  
(434) 582-5120

#### **Piedmont Regional Office**

*Cities: Colonial Heights,  
Emporia, Hopewell,  
Petersburg, Richmond*  
4949-A Cox Road  
Glen Allen, VA 23060  
(804) 527-5020

#### **Tidewater Regional Office**

*Cities: Chesapeake,  
Franklin, Hampton,  
Newport News, Norfolk,  
Portsmouth, Poquoson,  
Suffolk, Virginia Beach,  
Williamsburg*  
5636 Southern Blvd.  
Virginia Beach, VA 23462  
(757) 518-2000



## About VPCGA:



The Virginia Petroleum, Convenience and Grocery Association (VPCGA) is a non-profit, statewide trade association representing the petroleum and food industries.

Members of the association provide Oilheat and full HVAC services to more than 400,000 homes and businesses across the Commonwealth. Additionally, we literally fuel Virginia's economy by supplying petroleum products to our armed forces, municipalities, mass transit, and thousands of truckers, farmers, watermen and contractors across Virginia.

VPCGA members include petroleum marketers, convenience stores, travel centers, chain and independent supermarkets: approximately 650 retail members operate more than 6,000 convenience and grocery stores from Pennington Gap to Chincoteague and employ more than 55,000 Virginians.

### **“Virginia Neighbors Serving Neighbors”**

Please feel free to contact us with any general questions about Oilheat or any of your home comfort needs.

#### **VPCGA**

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Suite 204  
Richmond, Virginia 23226  
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Visit our website! [www.vpcga.com](http://www.vpcga.com)



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