

## Heating Oil Tank Bulletin #3

# Frequently Asked Questions About Heating Oil Tanks

### What is a heating oil tank?

For the purposes of DEQ's program, a heating oil tank is an underground tank used for storing heating fuel for use on site. The heating oil tank is part of a heating oil system that should be maintained and, if necessary, replaced just as roofs, appliances, furnaces and water heaters that require on-going maintenance and are replaced when they are no longer useful. The useful life of an unprotected steel tank is about 20 years.

### I have a heating oil tank that is no longer used. What am I required to do with it?

Oregon law (ORS 466.878) requires the owner to pump out all heating oil from an abandoned (unused) underground heating oil tank when:

- The tank is no longer used as a heating source.
- The tank has been replaced with a new one.
- The home or business is sold.

Please refer to Bulletin #1, "Requirements for Heating Oil Tanks No Longer in Use."  
([www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotbull1.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotbull1.htm))

### What should I know about buying or selling a home with a heating oil tank?

Please refer to Bulletin #2, "What You Should Know about Buying or Selling a Home with a Heating Oil Tank."  
([www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotbull2.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotbull2.htm))

### Does DEQ have record of a heating oil tank on my property?

The DEQ does not have records on active or abandoned heating oil tanks. However, there is a searchable database on the Internet at [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/lustpubliclookup.asp](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/lustpubliclookup.asp) that can be used to find out if there has been a documented leaking heating oil tank on your property. Please note that the database contains only information about known leaking heating oil tanks. If you do not find a tank listed in the database, it does not mean that there is no tank at that site.

### If the DEQ does not have any records of a tank on my property, how do I determine if there is a heating oil tank?

To locate a buried tank first try to find the fill pipe (where fuel was delivered by the fuel truck) or the vent pipe. The fill pipe will often be close to the ground over the tank. The vent pipe is usually visible up the side of the house 2 feet to 8 feet above the ground surface. Each set of pipes leads to the top of the tank, which is typically 2 feet below the ground. Attempt to locate the furnace that was fueled by the heating oil tank, and track the piping out through the foundation to the tank.

You can also determine whether other homes in the area had heating oil tanks. If adjacent homes built during the same time have tanks, then it is likely that there may be a tank on your property.

### Why should a heating oil tank be decommissioned?

Underground heating oil tanks are a potential source of contamination of the soil and groundwater, may pose a fire and explosion hazard under certain conditions, and heating oil from leaking underground tanks may impact human health. Underground tanks also corrode and over time may weaken to the point where they can no longer hold fuel.

### How do I find out if a contractor is licensed by DEQ to perform heating oil tank services?

A current list of licensed contractors is available at [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotsplist.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotsplist.htm). If you do not have Internet access, please call toll-free at 1-800-742-7878 and leave your name and address. A list of licensed companies will be mailed to you.

### Can DEQ recommend a good contractor?

No, the DEQ does not recommend contractors. We can provide you with a list of licensed contractors or let you know if the contractor you have selected is currently licensed.



State of Oregon  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality

Land Quality Division  
Underground Storage  
Tank Program  
811 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204  
Phone: (800) 742-7878  
Fax: (503) 229-6954  
[www.deq.state.or.us](http://www.deq.state.or.us)

You can also make an appointment to review the DEQ service provider file for a contractor you are interested in hiring by calling (503) 229-5489. You may also want to call the Oregon Construction Contractors Board in Salem at (503) 378-4621, ext. 4900 to see if the contractor has had any complaints and that their Construction Contractors Board license is current. This information is also on the Board's Web site at [www.ccb.state.or.us](http://www.ccb.state.or.us)

### **What happens to my cleanup if the rules change after the work is completed and the file is closed?**

The file will not be reopened because of a rule change. Typically, the only time file is reopened is when new or undisclosed facts show that the cleanup does not comply with the rules in place at the time of cleanup.

### **I have removed my tank from the ground. What do I do with it?**

The empty, inert (rendered explosion-free), and cleaned tank can be recycled with any metal recycler or disposal facility. Disposal receipts should be saved.

### **What do I do with the oil still in the tank?**

An oil dealer or an oil recycler can pump the oil out. Look in your phone directory under oil or waste oil.

### **I have a tank that I want to decommission. What do I do?**

We recommend that you hire a DEQ-licensed service provider to perform this work for you. A list of contractors is available at [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotsplist.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotsplist.htm) or by calling toll-free at 1-800-742-7878.

If you are thinking about decommissioning your own tank, you can access the regulations at [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/177rules.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/177rules.htm) or you can call toll-free at 1-800-742-7878 and have a copy of the information mailed to you.

If you have any questions after you have read the rules and regulations, you can call (503) 229-5618 and talk with a heating oil tank specialist.

### **What is a soil matrix cleanup?**

A soil matrix cleanup is one of several approaches for addressing heating oil contamination and involves the removal of most, if not all, of the contaminated soil at a cleanup site. For more information, refer to the Heating

Oil Underground Storage Tank rules at [www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/177rules.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/177rules.htm).

### **What is the heating oil tank generic remedy?**

The heating oil tank generic remedy is one of several approaches for addressing heating oil contamination. The generic remedy involves property where some low-level contamination can remain at the site. This may involve some soil removal to achieve the requirements. This method cannot be used for sites with groundwater present in the area of the tank. Refer to the DEQ's "Heating Oil Tank Generic Remedy Document" for more information. ([www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotgnrem.htm](http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/tank/hotgnrem.htm))

### **What is a risk-based cleanup?**

A risk-based cleanup is a method for addressing heating oil contamination that may allow you to leave much of the contamination on the property. A more extensive investigation and evaluation must show that the contamination can remain without posing a risk to human health and the environment. A risk-based cleanup is typically used when removal of contamination may undermine the foundation of the house, or when costs to remove contamination are prohibitive.

### **Which cleanup method should I choose?**

Depending on the extent of contamination and other relevant factors, the responsible person should determine which cleanup option is best suited for the contamination release. Financial considerations, site-specific information, personal preferences of the property owner, and the ability to remove contamination help to determine the best approach.

### **How much will it cost me to decommission my tank?**

The average cost to decommission a tank is about \$1,300. Cost may vary due to differing site conditions and the tank size.

### **Heating oil contamination has been discovered at my property. How much will it cost me to have it cleaned up?**

The average cost of a heating oil tank cleanup is approximately \$3,800. However, costs vary greatly depending on the type of cleanup and the magnitude of the contamination. Average costs for different types of cleanup are listed below.

Soil Matrix Cleanup	\$3,516
Generic Remedy Cleanup	\$3,272
Risk-Based Cleanup	\$4,631

When evaluating the options for cleanup, you should discuss the specifics of your site with your contractor. Although the average risk-based cleanup is higher than the other cleanup approaches, the cost of the cleanups might have been higher if the contamination had been removed and the soil taken offsite for disposal or treatment.

**I do not have Internet access. How do I get my questions answered?**

If you do not have Internet access you can call toll-free at 1-800-742-7878 and have a copy of the requested information mailed to you. If the information DEQ sends you does not answer your question, please call (503) 229-5263 and ask to speak with the Heating Oil Tank Program and your question will be routed to the appropriate party.

**Do I have to decommission my above-ground heating oil tank?**

Above-ground heating oil tanks are not regulated by the DEQ, so decommissioning and certification are not necessary.

**I'm going to sell my house, and the buyer is requesting a decommissioning letter from the DEQ. What do I need to do in order to get a letter from the DEQ?**

Contractors or homeowners decommissioning their own tank must submit a report, and "certify" that their work is in compliance with all regulatory requirements and cleanup standards have been met. The report, certification letter and a fee of \$50 for a clean decommission or \$125 for a cleanup is submitted to the DEQ. If the required documentation and fees have been submitted, the DEQ then registers the certified cleanup report and sends a letter to the responsible person. The DEQ audits various certifications and contractors for general work practices and reporting.

**Alternative Formats**

*Alternative formats of this document can be made available. Contact the DEQ Office of Communication and Outreach for more information: (503) 229-5696.*