

Self-Inspection Checklist for Basement and Outdoor Home Heating Oil Tanks

Each year in New Hampshire there are more than 100 oil spills from household on-premise-use heating oil tanks. The cost to clean up a spill can range from \$5,000 to several hundred thousand dollars, not to mention the disruption and inconvenience to the homeowner. Some spills occur due to overfilling the tank. Others occur because the tank was not properly located, installed or maintained.

New heating oil tanks and heating systems should be installed in accordance with the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Code for the Installation of Oil Burning Equipment (NFPA 31), applicable local codes, and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) best management practices. But what about the maintenance of existing tanks? It is very easy to forget about your oil tank until it needs to be filled or until there is a problem and you are without heat. An oil tank, like other containers, can leak or play a role in an oil spill if it is not periodically checked and maintained. This is particularly true of oil tanks located outside.

NHDES recommends that you inspect your tank system at least every three months. Below is a short checklist of items that you can easily observe to reduce the chance that oil will be accidentally released from your tank or its piping. If you answer "NO" to any of the following questions, your tank system may be at risk. You should contact your oil company or a reputable plumbing & heating contractor for further evaluation. NHDES recommends that you only look and not touch when you inspect your tank and piping. Rather than attempting to do it yourself, let a trained professional correct any problems or deficiencies.

SELF-INSPECTION CHECKLIST:

- Are the tank and all portions of the system free from any leaks? Yes No
- Does the tank meet either Underwriters Laboratory 80 or 142 standards?
(Typically indicated by a sticker or stamped label.) Yes No
- Are the tank and all supports free from significant rust and corrosion? Yes No
- Is the tank completely above the ground and at least 4 inches from
any surface on all sides? Yes No
- Is the tank set on a one-piece concrete pad or concrete floor? Yes No
- Are the tank legs installed with floor flanges or another type of "feet"? Yes No
- If outdoors, is the tank on the gable end of the building or otherwise
protected from roof ice & snow damage? Yes No

- If outdoors, is the filter covered or otherwise adequately protected? Yes No
- Is the supply line continuously plastic-coated copper from the tank to the furnace with no unions or splices? Yes No
- Is the inside diameter of the vent pipe at least 1.25 inches and equal to or larger than the fill pipe? Yes No
- Does the tank have a working sight gauge and vent whistle?
(An audible device to warn the oil delivery person that the tank is full.) Yes No
- Are both the fill and vent lines fitted with proper caps? Yes No

Who do I call for more information? Contact your heating oil dealer, your burner technician, your plumbing & heating contractor, or the NHDES Oil Remediation and Compliance Bureau at (603) 271-3899. For more information about residential heating oil tanks and the NHDES “Best Management Practices for the Installation and Upgrading of On-Premise-Use Heating Oil Tanks,” contact us or visit the [NHDES website](#) and search for “on premise use heating oil tanks.”

Disclaimer: Information contained in this fact sheet is current as of January 1, 2020. Statutory or regulatory changes that may occur after that date may cause part or all of the information to become invalid. If there are any questions concerning the status of information, please contact NHDES at (603) 271-3899.