

UNDERGROUND OIL TANKS

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More commonly called UST's, underground storage tanks have been raising environmental, safety, legal, and economic concerns for homeowners and homebuyers for the last 30 years. While we've found them to last longer, a common life expectancy of buried oil tanks is 10-15 years.

LEAKING HEATING OIL TANKS: HOMEOWNER RESPONSIBILITY

As a homeowner, you should know that you are responsible if your oil tank leaks. Whether located above ground, underground or in a cellar, a leaking home oil storage tank can cause considerable, expensive damage. Bare steel tanks, such as those used in residences, can corrode and leak oil into the ground and into groundwater. Many steel tanks are buried in the ground where corrosion and leaks go undetected. You are liable for petroleum cleanup costs but you may not be insured. Your homeowner's insurance policy may have a pollution exclusion clause, making you liable for cleanup costs-which can run up to \$40,000 or more.

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF A RELEASE HAS OCCURRED

Releases from UST systems can originate from one or more of the system components (i.e., tanks, piping, pumps) as well as from spills and overfills. You should suspect a leak when you discover the following warning signals:

- Unusual operating conditions (such as erratic behavior of the dispensing pump). Check first to see if this problem results from equipment failure that can be repaired.
- Results from leak detection monitoring and testing that indicate a leak. What at first appears to be a leak may be the result of faulty equipment that is part of your UST system or its leak detection. Double-check this equipment carefully for failures.
- Reports from fuel delivery drivers.
- Complaints from neighbors about vapors in their basements or about water that tastes or smells like petroleum.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO REMOVE AN UNDERGROUND TANK

Removal contractors generally charge between \$500 and \$3500 depending on the size of the tank, its condition, and how easily it can be reached. Usually not included in this price are the cost of a replacement tank, sampling and testing, cleanup work if a leak is found, and landscaping after the removal is complete.



HOW TO AVOID LEAK DISASTERS

You can help avoid tank leak disasters by:

- Checking your above ground tank for corrosion and leaks, especially lines, connections and supports.
- Removing old or unused vent or fill lines;
- Filling your tank only to capacity- do not overfill;
- Checking periodically for unusual drops in your tank's fuel oil level that cannot be explained by usage;
- Replacing your underground bare steel tank with fiberglass tank; and
- Checking you insurance coverage.