

To protect your oil, your property, your drinking water and the environment you should consider the following:

- The **condition** of your oil tank – is it old, rusty and without a bund?
- How **secure** is your oil against theft? Is the tank screened from sight, lockable or do you need to re-locate it?
- What to do if you find a **leak**, who to contact or how to limit the potential impacts.
- Have you got the right **home insurance**? Does your insurance cover heating oil?
- Is your tank in the **best position**? How close is it to watercourses, ponds, wells and springs?
- Do you know where your **pipework** runs to? Damage to the feed pipe may not be obvious; is it protected?
- During your annual heating system service ensure that your technician inspects your tank for signs of tampering, corrosion, bulging or staining, which indicate a potential or actual leak.



### If the worst happens and you have a leak or spill:

- Deal with it immediately. If you leave it you could cause a serious pollution incident.
- If you can, stop the flow of oil from source by closing valves or using material from a spill kit.
- Call the EA 24 hour emergency hotline on 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours) to get advice and help. You are in an environmentally-sensitive location, which needs a very quick response to prevent serious pollution of the local environment and drinking water supplies.
- Contact your fuel supplier for advice (they may offer a clean-up service or be able to recommend a course of action).
- Never wash any spilt oil away into drains or into the ground. Most drains connect to the nearest stream or river and oil can cause serious pollution.
- Never use detergents to clean up the oil; you could cause a worse pollution incident.
- Use the contents of a spill kit, sandbags or earth to soak up the oil if it's on a hard surface and to stop it entering drains, rivers or streams.
- If the oil has soaked into the soil/ground, you'll need to take action quickly to prevent it soaking further and possibly into groundwater supplies. You'll need a professional company with training and accreditation to clean up oil. Contact OFTEC for a local approved contractor (0845 65 85 080 option 3 for Technical Dept.)
- Contact your insurance company to tell them that there's been a leak or spill from your tank or pipework, that a clean up operation may be needed and to claim the cost of your lost oil.

## Useful contacts

### Environment Agency

0800 80 70 60 (24 hour emergency hotline)  
www.gov.uk/environment-agency

### OFTEC (Oil Firing Technical Association)

01473 626 298  
enquiries@oftec.org  
www.oftec.co.uk

### Portsmouth Water

023 9249 9888 (during normal hours)  
023 9247 7999 (24 hour emergency line)  
dwsp@portsmouthwater.co.uk  
www.portsmouthwater.co.uk

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HOW SAFE IS YOUR

# Heating Oil Storage Tank?



**Vision:**

Delivering excellence  
for our customers, our people and our environment

As your water supplier, Portsmouth Water abstracts groundwater contained within the Chalk rock of the South Downs. Over recent years we have experienced an increased number of pollution incidents caused by faulty or badly maintained fuel oil storage tanks, the failing of ancillary pipework and from criminal activity, especially related to the attempted theft of oil.



Taking action now can help prevent environmental pollution and avoid a costly clean-up. Cleaning up an oil spill is disruptive, and can take months or years of digging trenches and sinking boreholes on your property, monitoring visits, meetings with regulators, insurance companies, loss adjusters, consultants and solicitors.

If fuel oil spillages were to affect a groundwater used to supply drinking water, the clean-up costs could exceed £1 million. In the worst case scenario the source may have to be abandoned, resulting in reduced water supplies in the local area. The development of a new source can take years and cost many millions of pounds.

## Did you know?

Your property is located above chalk rock that is the source of your drinking water. This water is vulnerable to pollution from any oils that can easily enter the ground.



## Prevention is better than cure!

The clean up of oil spills is difficult, can be very expensive and potentially stressful. A recent domestic spill cost a householder **over £100,000 to clean up** and the property owner informed us that they had not slept for weeks due to the stress of the situation. The oil migrated towards a public water supply borehole, which had to be isolated from supply. Only quick reaction from the insurers and Portsmouth Water prevented the borehole from becoming contaminated.



## Don't forget your pipework!

Your pipework is a vulnerable part of your heating system. Two recent oil spills within high risk areas were due to corroded pipework. These spillage of 2,000 litres of oil resulted in an important public water supplies being offline for nearly one year. This put strain on local supplies; had another treatment works become unavailable, local water supplies could have been severely compromised.

## Did you know?

Property owners are responsible to cover clean-up costs, either directly or through their insurance company. Heating oil can penetrate into your household walls and plumbing, rendering your property uninhabitable during remediation work. The oil can also migrate to and affect your neighbours' properties.



## Wells and boreholes on properties

A borehole or well located on a property can act as a direct pathway for contaminants, including domestic heating oil, to enter groundwater in the event of a spill or leak. This includes ornamental wells located inside properties if oil fired boilers are nearby. A pollution incident associated with a private well or borehole could lead to significant disruption to your lifestyle and high costs.

If you have a well or borehole on your property please take the time to:

- 1 Check if there any sources of contamination near the well or borehole;
- 2 Check to see if your well or borehole is protected to prevent contaminants entering and consequently polluting groundwater which may be abstracted for public water supply in the local area.

Regular inspections of your oil storage units should be undertaken alongside frequent checks of your well or borehole. If you have any concerns regarding your well/borehole or heating oil set up please contact Portsmouth Water (catchment. management@portsmouthwater.co.uk) or your oil contractor to discuss. Further information can also be found at the website below:

[www.oilcare.org.uk](http://www.oilcare.org.uk)

**Please remember:** during your annual heating system service, your contractor should always inspect your tank and pipework