

Both spills and leaks can have a potentially serious impact on the environment, contaminating soil, groundwater and surface water as well as impairing the safety/ health of people, animals and ecological systems. The main challenge with establishing the condition of underground oil storage tanks is that the tank and piping are not visible. Aside from obvious indicators like visible oil and persistent hydrocarbon odors, the following tasks can be completed to further evaluate tank conditions:

- Reviewing fuel delivery records for potential increases while taking temperature extremes into consideration. For example, if fuel delivery rates increase while temperatures remain consistent, there may be a potential leak. Consulting with your fuel supply contractor may assist you in completing this task.
- Consulting with a qualified contractor to complete a pressure test of the tank and associated piping to establish if holes are present in the tank or piping
- Collecting soil samples in close proximity to the base of the tank (using soil boring techniques) and analyzing the soil samples at a laboratory for the presence of fuel oil parameters.
- Excavating soil from around the tank to visually inspect the conditions of the tank and associated piping.

If you're concerned with the condition of your tank, it may make sense to forego a potentially expensive investigation and simply replace it with an above ground tank to improve marketability of your home. It is important to note that some insurance companies are extremely cautious about insuring underground fuel storage tanks since underwriters are unable to inspect underground tanks due to their inaccessible nature. Discuss the specifics of your situation with your realtor to decide whether you might consider contacting a professional engineer that is an expert in the field of underground storage tanks for further evaluation.

2. Following are the tips for furnace maintenance:

- Set your thermostat at your comfort level and then Forget you have one. It takes less energy to heat air 4-5 degrees than it does to heat air 8-10 degrees.
- Help your furnace to breath easy and work effectively, clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month.
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.
- Place heat-resistant radiator reflectors between exterior walls and the radiators.
- Use kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans wisely; in just 1 hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed or cooled air. Turn fans off as soon as they have done the job.
- Keep draperies and shades open on south-facing windows during the heating season to allow sunlight to enter your home; close them at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.
- Select energy-efficient equipment when you buy new heating equipment. Your contractor should be able to give you energy fact sheets for different types, models, and designs to help you compare energy usage.
- Before you call for a emergency service tech to come and fix your system. We recommend trying these 3 tips, they will save you money and time.
 - Check the thermostat to verify that it is calling for heating.
 - Check your breaker box to verify if the breaker is on.
 - Check furnace switch and insure that your gas is on.

3. Following are the tips for furnace maintenance:

- Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable. Keep the temperature fairly constant, as frequent changes will utilize more energy by causing unnecessary cycling on and off. Setting back the temperature at night, however, is recommended.

- Clean or replace furnace filters once a month or as needed. Oil-fired boilers should be professionally cleaned and tuned once a year. Gas-fired equipment needs to be checked every other year.
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed; make sure they are not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.
- Keep draperies and shades on south-facing windows open during the heating season to allow sunlight to enter your home; close them at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.
- Close the door to an unoccupied room or area that is isolated from the rest of the house and turn down the thermostat or turn off the heat for that room or area.
- Use kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans wisely. Turn these fans off as soon as they are no longer needed. In about 1 hour, these fans can pull out a house-full of warmed or cooled air. They can also pull dangerous furnace combustion gasses into the house in some situations.
- Check your ducts for air leaks. First look for sections that should be joined but have separated and then look for obvious holes.
- Do not use duct tape to repair leaky ducts. Standard duct tape has been shown unreliable in sealing duct leaks. Various mastics or non-cloth-backed tapes are preferable.

4. The following tips are good practices for this time of year:

- Get your furnace inspected and cleaned annually by a qualified professional.
- Change your furnace filter. A filter with a MERV rating of 10 or higher, which is indicated on the packaging, is required by the Health House guidelines. Filters with this rating can trap very small allergens. If you have a whole-house electronic air cleaner, this would be a good time to clean the filters.
- Open your windows when you first operate your furnace to ventilate the stale air. Have any family members with dust allergies leave the home for a few hours (the longer the better) to avoid exposure.

References:

http://www.amerispec.ca/english/brochures/5_furnace.htm

http://www.aaaindoorairquality.com/furnace_tips.html

<http://www.metroenergysavers.com/tipsfurnaces.asp>

<http://www.healthhouse.org/consumer/FallFurnaceTips.asp>