

What's the Risk?

Buried Oil Tanks



THE ISSUE

Many residential properties that were (or continue to be) heated by oil may have had a buried oil tank on the property. Burying fuel tanks was once common, but the practice has been discontinued due to tanks corroding and leaking over time.



WHAT'S THE RISK?

Buried oil tanks are the cause of many oil leaks on properties. Leaking oil tanks have cost insurance companies millions of dollars in claims to clean up spilt or spilling oil and remediate the soil and surrounding area where buried tanks existed. Oil spills are costly, disruptive, dangerous and can lead to groundwater contamination that could last for decades. Most buried oil tanks have been removed for health, safety, and environmental reasons however, many still exist on rural properties, near homes built before 1970, and on cottage or vacation properties.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Take the following steps to determine if there is a buried oil tank on your property.

- Examine the area around the perimeter of the residence, looking for evidence of a buried tank. This may include:
 - areas where grass or flowers will not grow
 - areas where there is the distinct smell of fuel oil outside the house
 - metal pipes sticking out of the ground – if a tank is present there will be one pipe about 50 mm (2 inches) wide and a smaller pipe that may have a fitting in the shape of the letter U on top
 - a metal plate located at the ground surface which has no apparent reason for being there
- Speak to previous owners or neighbours to determine if they are aware of any buried oil tanks
- Contact fuel oil suppliers in the area to determine if they are aware of the property having a buried fuel tank or contact your own fuel supplier to do an examination of the property
- Contact your insurance company to determine if their loss prevention staff can help identify any potential buried tanks

