

WATER BULLETIN

Water Quality Program, College of Human Ecology, Cornell University

Underground Fuel/Heating Oil Storage

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Spring 2003

Do you store fuel or heating oil in an underground storage tank on your property? If so, do you know how old this tank is? Old steel underground tanks can corrode and may leak. Many older tanks need to be replaced. Fuel leaks can pollute surface and groundwater on your property. If you have a well, leaks can threaten drinking water supplies.

The cleanup of leaks can also be very expensive. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) estimates that cleanup for a large leak could cost as much as \$20,000. To prevent a leak, the DEC recommends the following:

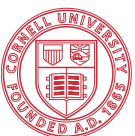
- Inspect your underground storage tank and property for signs of fuel/oil leaks. Drastic drops in fuel oil may be a sign of a leak.
- Run tightness tests on your storage tank and pipes to determine if leaks are probable. It is often better to remove a tank before leaks occur. Tanks should be removed by a professional.
- Alternatively, leave your storage tank underground and have it emptied. New York state law requires that all heating oil tanks left underground be cleaned and that all vapors be removed. The tank's fill line also should be sealed.
- Replace your underground tanks with an above ground tank located in a basement or other contained area.

Some counties have stricter regulations on underground storage tanks. Check with your local Department of Health (DOH) to find out the regulations in your county. If you have any further questions, contact DEC or your local Cooperative Extension office.

Reference

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. 1998. Underground Heating Oil Tanks: A Homeowner's Guide.

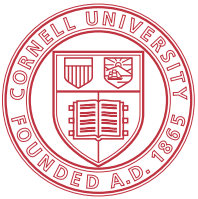
This article was first published in the Housing & Home Environment newsletter (HHE) in Spring 2003.



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