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Washington State Pollution Liability Insurance Agency

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Residential Heating Oil Tanks

Many Washington State residents heat their homes using oil from a heating oil tank on their property. Residential heating oil tanks can be underground, in a basement, or above ground. This fact sheet provides guidance on how to:

- Monitor and maintain your tank.
- Insure your tank against leaks.
- Check your tank for leaks.
- Take action if your tank has leaked.

Why do I need to monitor and maintain my heating oil tank?

Your heating oil tank requires careful monitoring and maintenance. Improperly maintained tanks can develop holes and release heating oil into the environment. Tanks that leak can contaminate the soil, and nearby surface water and groundwater. Leaking oil can even impact the inside of nearby homes. Under state law, you may be held liable for the cleanup and natural resource damages caused by leaks from your tank.

How can I insure my heating oil tank against leaks?

You should register your heating oil tank with the Washington Pollution Liability Insurance Agency (PLIA). PLIA's heating oil insurance program provides **insurance coverage at no cost** to owners of active heating oil tanks used to heat a living or working space. The program provides up to \$60,000 of insurance coverage for cleaning up contamination caused by a leak from a heating oil tank registered in the program prior to the start of the leak.

To register your tank with PLIA, download the registration form at www.plia.wa.gov

How do I know if my heating oil tank is leaking?

If you suspect your heating oil tank is leaking, take immediate action. The earlier you act, the less oil will leak into surrounding soil, nearby surface water or groundwater.

To determine if your tank is leaking:

- Check if you have water in your heating oil tank. You can do this by calling a service company to test your tank, or you can do it yourself by using a stick and water reactive paste.
- Monitor your fuel usage carefully for any changes in

consumption. Increased fuel usage can be a sign your tank is leaking.

- Check areas near your tank and your service lines for any visible signs of leaking or odor.

What should I do if my tank is leaking?

If you confirm your tank is leaking:

1. Report to Ecology any release to the environment.

You must notify the Department of Ecology (Ecology) of any release to the environment. You can notify Ecology by phone, email, or using an online form. Contact information is available at: www.ecy.wa.gov/reportenviroproblem.html.

Eastern Region 1-509-329-3400

(Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties)

Central Region 1-509-575-2490

(Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, and Yakima counties)

Northwest Region 1-425-649-7000

(Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties)

Southwest Region 1-360-407-6300

(Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum counties)

If the release has entered the surface waters of the state (such as lakes, rivers, creeks, or storm sewers), you must also notify the Washington Emergency Management Division at 1-800-258-5990.

2. Contact PLIA to confirm whether your tank is insured.

You should contact PLIA at 1-800-822-3905 as soon as possible to confirm if your leaking tank is registered under the Heating Oil Insurance Program and whether the leak is covered by the Program. If you wait too long to file a claim, you may lose your coverage.

Even if the leak is not covered by the Heating Oil Insurance Program, you can still request technical assistance on tank removal and environmental cleanup from PLIA under the Heating Oil Technical Assistance Program. The service is available for a \$350 flat fee. For more information, contact PLIA.

After you have notified Ecology and contacted PLIA, you will need to take additional actions to prevent further releases from the leaking tank and to clean up the contamination caused by the leak. For more information, see our Fact Sheet on Leaking Heating Oil Tanks (PLIA Publication 15-06-02), available at: <http://www.plia.wa.gov>.

Reminder:

If you have a leaking heating oil tank, do not refill it. If you have an unused tank, have a qualified professional check the tank before putting it back into use.

Never put household waste like paint, antifreeze, or used motor oil into an unused residential heating oil tank.