Check Your Heating Oil Tank for Water

Why It's Important

If there is water in your tank, this may indicate that the tank is leaking. A leaking tank pollutes soil as well as nearby surface and groundwater. Heating oil pollution poses hazardous impacts to human health and the environment if left unresolved.

A few other problems that could occur from water in your tank include:

- Rust - this can increase the likelihood of future leaks.
- Microbial contamination - water in the tank can breed bacteria, which can cause corrosion in the tank.
- Frozen fuel lines - this can stop the flow of oil leading to heat loss, and can cause pipes to burst.

Causes

Two common ways that water can enter a tank include:

- Rainwater seeping into the tank, especially out- door tanks.
- Condensation can occur when the temperature inside the tank is cooler than the temperature outside the tank. This process causes water vapor in the tank to turn to liquid.

Prevention

Some ways to prevent water getting in your tank include:

- Making sure lids are securely closed.
- Yearly tank inspections by a technician.
- Adjusting your tank's temperature to reduce condensation.
- Maintaining a full tank.
- Replacing old tanks.

Removal of Water from Tank

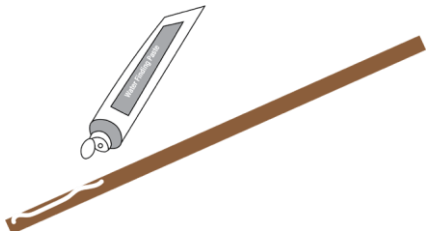
To remove water from a tank, it is best to hire a qualified technician who can drain or pump it from the tank.

If your tank is over 15 years old, you may also want to consider replacing it.

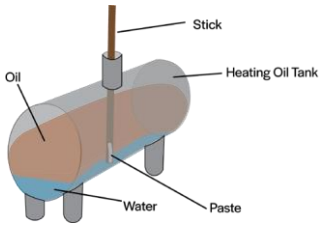
How to Check Your Tank for Water

It is recommended that you check your heating oil tank for water at least once a year. With a long stick and water indicating paste that changes color upon contact with water, you can perform this inspection yourself by following these steps:

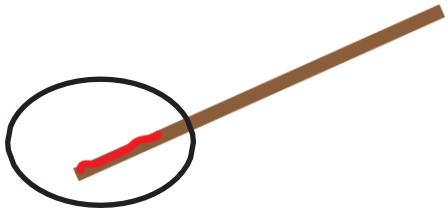
Step 1: Apply water indicating paste to one end of a long stick.



Step 2: Insert the paste- end of your stick into your heating oil tank so that it reaches the bottom.



Step 3: Check the paste color on the stick. If the paste changes color, then there is water in your heating oil tank.



The Pollution Liability Insurance Agency's Heating Oil Programs

Our Heating Oil Programs:

Heating Oil Pollution Liability Insurance
Heating Oil Technical Assistance
Heating Oil Loan and Grant

For more information about our Heating Oil Technical Assistance Program, please contact:

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