



DEC News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEC says spill prevention begins at home Simple check of heating oil tanks can protect health, home, environment

October 2, 2003—With winter just around the corner, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) urges homeowners to protect their health, family and the environment by inspecting their heating oil tanks for leaks.

Spills and leaks from oil tanks contaminate water and land and can be expensive to clean up -- costs exceeding \$10,000 are not unusual. Homeowner's insurance rarely covers the costs. A spill which is not properly cleaned up can also lower property values. "That's the bad news; the good news is that preventing this from happening is easy and relatively cheap," said DEC's heating oil spill prevention specialist Bob Fultz.

According to Fultz, DEC relies on homeowners to check their own systems and advises homeowners to inspect their tanks, lines and filters and make needed corrections before colder weather sets in.

With basic care and maintenance, many spills are preventable. When inspecting your heating system check for:

- unusually high fuel consumption or water in the tank – you may have a leak,
- corrosion, rot, and leaks in the tank, tank supports and lines,
- cracks in sight gauges or filters,
- tanks located where snow and ice can fall on them from the roof or trees.

Any spill of oil to land or water is reportable to DEC. Some obvious signs of a spill include pooled oil, diesel odor, areas of darkened soil, dead or absent vegetation, sheens on ice, and an unusual taste or odor to well water.

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Additional information on caring for, inspecting and installing your heating oil tank is available at www.state.ak.us/dec/dspar/perp/hho.htm. DEC also recommends checking with local city or fire officials about other requirements they may have.