

## Common Questions

Why should the tank be steam cleaned and the sludge be removed?

- To eliminate any future pollution threat.

Why cut off fill and vent pipes, and remove or cap the supply and return lines?

- To prevent any oil in the lines from leaking out and to prevent the accidental use of the lines in the future.

Why fill the tank with an inert material?

- To prevent the tank from coming out of the ground due to frost heaving or flooding. It also prevents the tank from collapsing and causing a sink hole in the future.



## Tips

- Take pictures - this will provide a record of tank closeout/removal for future buyers.
- Have an environmental consultant take samples of the site. If there is a pollution problem it can be fixed. If there is not a problem you can prove it!
- Mark the location of a decommissioned tank so future residents don't accidentally dig into the tank.
- If a contracting company removes the tank, request a report detailing the actions taken.

For more information on heating oil systems visit:

<https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/prevention-preparedness/hho-tanks/>

**ADEC Response Line**

**1-800-478-9300**

**ReportSpills.alaska.gov**

## UNDERGROUND HEATING OIL TANK CLOSURE GUIDE



**Alaska Department of  
Environmental Conservation**  
Division of Spill Prevention and  
Response

# Taking an Underground Tank Out of Service

## How Long Can an Underground Tank Last?

Some tanks last 30 years or more while others only last 5 years. Why the difference?

- Type of protective coating, or lack of, on tank.
- Type of soil or rock that surrounds the tank. Sand is good. Rocks tend to wear holes in the tank, often very quickly. If the tank is placed in very acidic soil it can wear out more rapidly.
- Constant contact with water can cause damage to the tank.
- The material and thickness of the tank can affect its lifespan.
- The location of underground electric lines can be very important. Underground electric lines can cause electrolysis in the tank or the fuel lines.



## Steps for Removing Your Underground Tank

1. Call your oil distributor and ask to discontinue oil service to the tank.
2. Contact local agencies and see if permits will be required for excavation.
3. Find an experienced contractor to do the job for you.
4. Remove all petroleum product from the tank and lines.
5. Excavate to the top of the tank and expose the piping.
6. All piping should be disconnected and drained.
7. Cut open the tank and remove oil sludge or residue and disposed of properly.
8. Once the tank is cleaned, it may be removed from the ground and disposed of properly.
9. Report any contamination of soil or groundwater found during the tank removal to your local ADEC office.

## Steps for Decommissioning Your Tank and Leaving in Place

1. Remove all fuel from the tank.
2. Uncover the tank and cut a hole in the top. (Should be done by a contractor.)
3. Clean the inside of the tank with steam or hot water.
4. Remove remaining mixture and sludge from the tank.
5. Cut off the fill and vent pipes, and remove (preferred) or permanently cap the old supply and return lines.
6. Fill the tank with clean, inert material, such as sand, and cover the tank with clean soil or rock.

