

HEATBASE Ltd FACTSHEET 42

Keeping your Oil Tank Installation Compliant & Safe

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Oil and LPG Fuel Storage installations including the pipework connecting them to the combustion appliances in the buildings they serve should be located and constructed so that they are reasonably protected from fires which may occur in buildings or beyond boundaries. Fire risk structures are not always defined as a building and can include garages, garden sheds, greenhouses, outbuildings, mobile homes and caravans, static caravans, childrens playhouses and fixed position barbeques etc.

Where an Oil storage tank has been installed after April 2002, it legally has to be installed and sited in conjunction to Building Regulations, British Standards and/or any additional regional requirements which cover Fire Protection and Environmental Pollution. Once installed in this manner the installation must be kept compliant and failure to do so could result in an Environmental Pollution incident or a fire; any insurance claim may be void if you have allowed the Installation to become “non-compliant”.

It should be noted that over the last few years there has been an increased amount of Oil tank fires which have caused major structural damage and also loss of life. In most cases the fires have started in garden sheds which have been erected too close to the Oil tank or Dustbins kept near to the Oil Storage tank.

To keep your Installation compliant and safe with regards to Protection against Fire you should read the following:

1. The area around the Oil tank should be kept clear of foliage and weeds and should not be used for storage purposes.
2. If you replace or move your existing oil tank it must be brought in line with “current” regulations; the only time this does not apply is if the tank needs to be removed to carry out remedial work to the base or supports before re-installing the tank in the same location.
3. A Domestic Oil tank of 3500 Litres or less should be installed a minimum of 760mm from a non-fire rated boundary, A Non-Domestic Oil tank of 3500 Litres or less should be installed a minimum of 2000mm from a non-fire rated boundary and a Domestic or Non-Domestic Oil tank with a capacity of 3501 Litres or more should be kept a minimum of 6000mm away from a non-fire rated boundary; therefore any foliage such as hedges, trees and plants which form part of the boundary must be kept at least this specified distance from the Oil tank to reduce the risk of a fire beyond your boundary spreading to the Oil tank. (see Factsheet 40 Fire protection and separation distances for Oil Tanks (England) for more detailed information).
4. Any non-fire rated screening (e.g. trellis, fencing, planting etc.) used to hide or obscure the Oil tank but does not form part of a boundary must be kept a minimum of 600mm from the Oil tank to reduce the risk of a fire spreading to the Oil tank; but must also incorporate a means to allow access for inspection of the oil tank and access to clean oil filters etc. Some people have tried to hide their Oil tanks by building a garden shed around them or encasing them within a purpose made structure; **this is not compliant with regulations!** As a “building” is defined as having at least 3 walls and a roof the Oil tank will therefore require additional means of protection and additional regulations will need to be followed (see Factsheet 40 Fire protection and separation distances for Oil Tanks (England)).
5. Bulk LPG storage tanks should be sited at least 3 meters from an Oil storage tank with a volume of up to 3000 Litres (if the Oil tank is above this capacity independent advice should be sought from the Local Authority and Fire Brigade). LPG bottles/cylinders should be kept a minimum of 1 meter from Oil storage tanks and any flue terminal should be a minimum of 300mm above the bottles/cylinder and 1 meter horizontally.
6. If you are building a garden shed, an extension, a detached annex or any other Fire risk structure etc., the Oil tank should not be closer than 1.8 metres (Domestic tank 3500 L or less), 2.0 metres (Non-Domestic tank 3500 L or less) or 6 metres (Domestic and Non-Domestic tank 3501 L or more) from a flue terminal, window, door, a non-fire rated wall of the building or non-fire rated eaves of a building. Fire risk structures are not always defined as a building and can include garages, garden sheds, greenhouses, out buildings, mobile homes, caravans, static caravans, childrens playhouses, and fixed position barbeques etc.

It is the owner/householders responsibility to ensure their system is compliant and safe.