

HEATBASE Ltd FACTSHEET 43

What to do in the event of an Oil spill

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If you store Oil on your property/premises, then you are ultimately responsible for its safe storage and the damage caused by it in the event of a spill or leak.

The aftermath of a fuel leak can vary from site to site and if the leaked fuel impacts building structures and buried services (such as water supply pipes) there can be significant disruption to residents that may be required to move out of the property while the clean-up is undertaken. Where the leaking fuel may enter controlled waters (streams or underground water), action must be quickly taken to prevent the spread of the contamination. We recommend you call the Environment Agency emergency hot line on 0800 80 70 60 (24hr service). Environment Officers can give you advice about how to reduce the impact of a spill.

The majority of people that have Oil tanks assume that their buildings insurance will cover the clean-up costs in the event of a spill; but this is not always the case. It is recommended that you check with your Insurance Company whether the costs relating to an Oil leak or spill and any subsequent costs are covered.

To help reduce the risk of an Oil spill you are advised to regularly check your Oil storage and supply system for leaks, rusting on metal tanks and discolouration, splits or distortion with plastic tanks.

To reduce the impact of damage and pollution you should also be aware of what to do in the event of an Oil leak/spill.

In the event of a loss of fuel being noted, the following action is recommended (where safe to do so):

- Try and identify the source of the leak and stem the flow if possible and safe to do so. For plastic oil tanks you may be able to temporarily stop the leak with leak sealing putty or by rubbing a bar of soft soap across the leak.
- Where spilled fuel is on the ground try to absorb this wherever possible and prevent the spread of spilled fuel to nearby buildings or watercourses using absorbing material such as sand bags, dry sand, soil, or cat litter etc. to contain the oil and prevent it from entering drains and waterways. Never use detergents or a hose to wash away oil.
- Where the leak is continuing, contact your fuel supplier to request they uplift the remaining fuel as quickly as possible.
- Notify your insurer as soon as possible as they will mobilise accredited contractors to respond to the spill.
- Identify whether any leaked fuel has migrated from your property and impacted third party land.
- Try and confirm the amount of fuel lost from the tank by examining records of previous usage and delivery dates.
- If the leak has entered controlled waters (drainage, streams, ponds, lakes or underground water etc.) contact the Environment Agency immediately on 0800 80 70 60.
- If the leak has impacted the building structure (for example if fuel vapours are present in the building) or if the drinking water supply has been tainted (tastes or smells of fuel), contact your local Environmental Health Officer.