



Residential Underground Storage Tanks = R.U.S.T.

What you need to know about your liability and about the procedures for removal.

What is the Problem?

Many RUSTs that hold heating oil or gasoline have outlived their advantages and have turned into a liability for their owners.

- *They leak, sooner or later.* Never meant to last forever, 50% of bare steel tanks are estimated to develop leaks within 15 years, according to the American Petroleum Institute. Just as often, the piping system is the source of the leak.
- *Leaking petroleum products contaminate the groundwater.* Toxic ingredients such as benzene, toluene or xylene threaten human health and the environment.
- *The tank owner is held liable for any damage done to someone else's drinking water supply and/or for the cost of removing contaminated soil.*
- *Banks routinely require either the removal of a RUST or that it be tested for tightness (which costs around \$500) before approving a home mortgage.*

- *Homeowner insurance policies* often exclude, explicitly or implicitly, coverage for damages resulting from leaking tanks and do not cover the cost of their removal.

These points weigh heavily against the advantage of having your oil tank out of sight — where you can indeed forget about it — and against the advantage of possible savings from storing more oil bought at a cheaper rate than a smaller indoor tank would allow you to do.

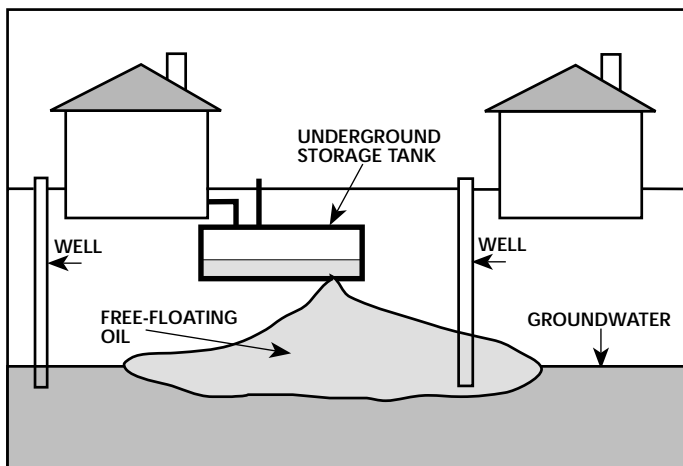
Regulations:

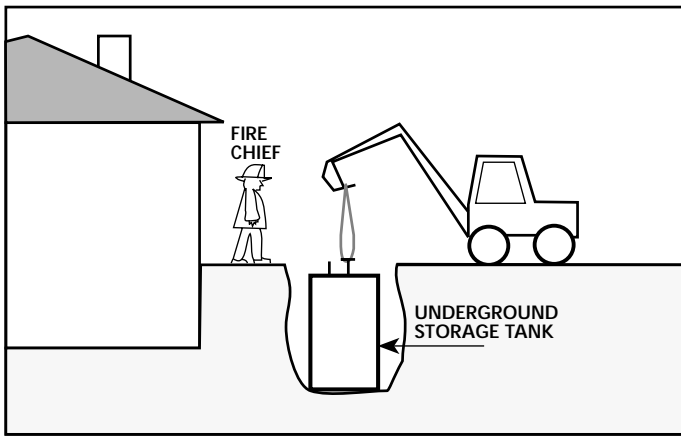
- All fuel tanks fall under the authority of the Department of Public Safety (527 CMR 9.00) represented by your local fire department.
- Many towns have adopted mandatory RUST testing and removal regulations. Others encourage owners to remove their tanks without taking recourse to mandates.
- The law does not allow filling tanks in-place with a concrete slurry unless the fire chief determines that pulling the tank would sacrifice the integrity of surrounding structures. Besides, this process costs almost as much as having the tank removed.

Procedure for Removing an Underground Storage Tank

Having your tank removed will involve two steps:

- 1) *Hiring a contractor* who will
 - a) obtain a permit from the fire department,
 - b) remove the tank from the ground,
 - c) remove any residue remaining in the tank and prepare it for safe transportation, and
 - d) transport the tank to an approved disposal





facility.

2) Replacing your old tank with a new above ground one (often in your basement.)

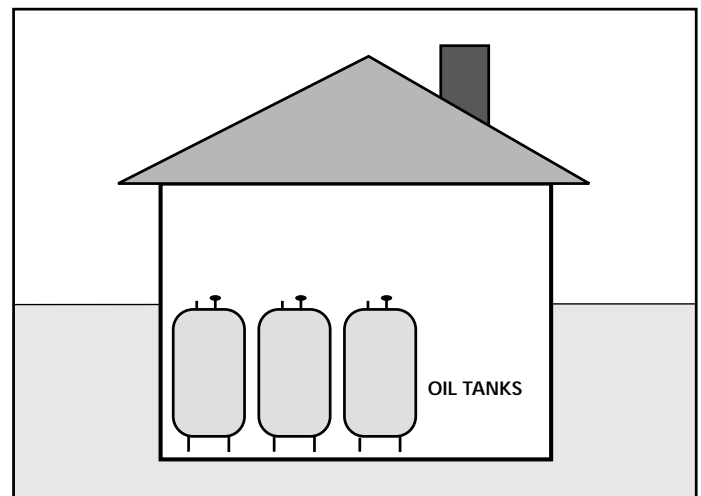
- Handling a tank that contains flammable vapors and liquids requires the skills of someone licensed to dispose of hazardous waste. Contractors specializing in tank removal advertise in the yellow pages under 'Tank Removal.'
- A fire department representative has to be present when your tank is dug up to determine whether there is any soil contamination and to make sure no contents are spilled in the removal process.
- The tank needs to be cleaned and prepared for transport.
- All tanks have to be disposed of according to a plan approved by the fire department.
- Your oil dealer should be helpful in the process of replacing your RUST with a residential exposed storage tank (REST) in your basement or outside.

Financing

Here are some general estimates for what you can expect to pay for **removing** this source of worry from your property:

- For a small tank (275- 550 gallons) — \$1,000 to \$1,500

- A 1,000-gallon tank could range from \$1,500 to \$2,500.
- *The cost of a **new tank** for your **basement** starts at around \$800 and depends on how much capacity you want to install. Tank sizes run between 220 and 330 gallons and you can install more than one, up to a maximum of four 330-gallon tanks or a 1,320 gallon capacity.*
- Installation of new tanks **outside** your home needs to be supervised by your fire department.
- The cost of removing **contaminated soil** is much harder to estimate. The process involves



representatives from the fire department, the Department of Environmental Protection and an engineer. Cost varies according to the amount of fuel that leaked, the location, and the type and amount of soil that has to be dug up, transported and disposed of. Quotes range from as low as \$10,000 to as high as \$100,000 for 'large' leaks — all the more reason to pull your tank sooner rather than later.

RUST owners may be able to reduce their cost by organizing and going for a group bid. Ask your fire department whether they are able and willing to assist with such an effort.

Don't let your RUST be 'out of sight - out of mind' any longer.

Written by Gisela Walker, Extension Specialist, Water Program, 7/92, updated 2/00. For more detailed information call your fire department or the Department of Environmental Protection in your region.