



The facts on oil tanks: What you need to know.

I'm hearing information in the news on tank spills. Are oil tanks a risk?

There is a growing body of information that indicates single-walled oil tanks, particularly those located outdoors, pose a greater risk of oil leaks than modern, non-corrosive fibreglass or plastic and improved steel tanks that have a double-bottom with a leak prevention monitoring device

And while the annual incidence of spills is relatively low – occurring in one half of one percent of all oilheat installations in the region – it reinforces the importance of proper preventative maintenance and the replacement of single-wall steel tanks with much safer storage solutions.

What is COHA's position?

Spill prevention has been a key priority for COHA members for many years. While the low percentage of spills (one half of one percent) suggests we're making headway, we're not satisfied. We believe all domestic oil spills can be prevented.

What is COHA doing to reduce leaks?

Stakeholder | Public Education & Outreach – The association continues to collaborate with the insurance industry, government stakeholders such as provincial Departments of Environment and Departments of Labour and industry regulators such as CSA to provide information, resources and support so homeowners understand and are aware of the importance of preventative maintenance and the options available when it comes to non-corrosive and spill-resistant fuel oil storage solutions, as well as cost-effective temporary solutions to prevent a minor spill from reaching the ground, should they not be ready to replace their existing single-wall storage tank.

GreenTECH Certification – The COHA GreenTECH Certification program demonstrates our commitment to excellence in tank installation and maintenance. Homeowners are encouraged to ask their installer if they've undergone COHA's "Best Practices for the Installation & Maintenance of Domestic Fuel Oil Storage Tanks". We continue to encourage homeowners to choose GreenTECH certified technicians to ensure their tank is properly installed and serviced.

Preventative Maintenance – We make sure our bodies and cars get regular checkups, but we are lacking when it comes to our home heating. COHA and its members strongly support regular inspection and preventative maintenance by certified GreenTECH technicians to improve tank performance, extend tank life spans and reduce the chance of spills.

Advocacy – COHA has a long history of working with government at all levels and other stakeholders to push for strong legislation dealing with the installation and replacement of domestic oil tanks to prevent spills. Having played a role in the creation of CSA B139 (the standard that governs oil tanks in Canada), we will continue to push to improve it in the future.

Innovative Products. Today's non-corrosive fibreglass or plastic tanks and the improved steel tank with double-bottom and leak prevention monitoring are better, safer and far more reliable than their single-wall counterpart. For homeowners with older tanks who are not in a position to replace their tanks at this time, there are a variety of cost-effective temporary solutions – drip pans, line protectors and gauge and valve protectors for example – that help to reduce the likelihood of a costly spill and its impact on the environment.

Is oilheat still a good choice for my home and family?

Today's oilheat is safe, modern and extremely efficient. When equipment is properly installed and maintained, today's oilheat is as environmentally responsible as a home heating choice as any other fossil fuel. A growing body of data shows modern tanks are extremely durable and pose little or no risk of corrosion-related incidents. COHA and its members are committed to providing smart, safe value to homeowners well into the future.

Isn't it outdated?

Definitely not. From the equipment to the product itself, oilheat is cleaner, safer and more efficient than it was 25-30 years ago and continues to be a viable heating option for Canadian homeowners.

The evolution of the industry has resulted in equipment that is incredibly efficient, and a cleaner fuel that is as environmentally responsible as heating with any other fossil fuel. Heating oil is competitively priced on a Btu to Btu basis, and is reliable. Our industry follows many regulations and standards that are designed to ensure our product and our people are operating at their best.

You talk a lot about tanks, but what about other oilheat equipment? How does it compare?

The evolution of oilheat equipment has increased efficiencies up to **97%**, dramatically reducing fuel consumption, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and saving energy dollars. Efficiencies in the 97% range put oilheat equipment on par with any kind of furnace, including natural gas and propane furnaces.

Oilheat equipment also has a longer life expectancy than most gas equipment and a longer life expectancy than heat pumps. On average, five to ten years longer. (Source: Oilheat Manufacturers Association)

What about the fuel itself? How has it changed over the years?

Today's oilheat is not the same product our grandparents used. The industry is vigorously working to cut sulphur content in heating oil from 1500 parts per million (ppm) to 500 ppm (low sulphur), and eventually to 15 ppm; the latter known as ultra-low sulphur heating oil.

These recent technological advancements in fuel technology, along with the introduction of bio-blends (the new alternative fuel with renewable content) have helped reduce emissions to near zero levels.