Fire and Rescue Services
New Westminster

Residential Underground Storage Tanks

Permit applications are available at:
Glenbrook Fire Hall - 1 East 6th Avenue
or online at: www.newwestcity.ca

Section 4.3.16.1 of the British Columbia Fire Code 2024 states that the removal, abandonment in place, disposal or temporary taking out of service of an underground storage tank shall be in conformance with good engineering practice. The British Columbia Fire Code also states that the owner or owner's authorized agent is responsible for carrying out the provisions of the Code.

WHERE TO START ...

Many homes built between the 1920s and 1960s used oil as a heating fuel, with oil tanks buried close to houses. Few homes use oil now and homeowners may not realize that they have an old tank on their property. Tanks have an average life of 20 to 25 years, after which they can begin to leak hazardous materials. It is recommended that tanks be removed. Decommissioning is only for those tanks situated in an area which would endanger the structural integrity of nearby buildings or other facilities.

New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services offers the following advice for homeowners regarding the removal or decommissioning of underground oil storage tanks:

1. Ways to find your tank.

(1) Look for visual signs of a tank's presence such as cast iron piping coming from the ground.
(2) Hire an Oil Tank Contractor to search for the presence of an oil tank using a metal detector.
(3) Contact New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services for information from their property database. Note that the database information may or may not be complete and does not include site plans.

2. Hire an Oil Tank Contractor and a Contaminated Site Approved Professional (CSAP).

We cannot recommend a specific contractor or CSAP to perform the work. Oil tank contractors are listed on the internet, in the Yellow Pages/BBB. We would recommend you obtain at least three separate quotes. Ensure the contractor you select has a business license to operate in the City of New Westminster, has WorkSafeBC coverage and has obtained the necessary permit from the Fire Department.

3. Possible Contamination.

If, when the tank is unearthed, there is soil contamination found, the CSAP will coordinate with the tank contractor and the Ministry of Environment for a cleanup plan.

4. Final Report.

Your CSAP/Contractor will submit a final report, which will include:

- Shipping records documenting recycling or disposal of the tank, piping residues, soil and fuel;
- An accurate site plan showing where the tank is located;
- Notes and good quality colour photos taken during removal, inspection and cleanup (if necessary), such photos to clearly display the site and tank condition;
- CSAP Report:
    - Documentation of any cleanup work done;
    - Contamination measurement results, including any analytical results.

The final report will be submitted to New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services for storing in the property's database.

The following documents are examples of good engineering practice pertaining to oil tanks: Annex C of NFPA 30, "Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code", American Petroleum Institute RP 1604, "Closure of Underground Storage Tanks", Part 9 of the "Environmental Code of Practice for Aboveground and Underground Storage Tank Systems Containing Petroleum Products and Allied Petroleum Products", published by the Canadian Council of Ministers for the Environment.

STEP 1 – HIRE A REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL

Check the internet/Yellow Pages/Better Business Bureau Contaminated Site Approved Professionals and Oil Tank Contractors.

Ensure the Contaminated Site Approved Professional you select is a member of one of the following associations:
- The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of BC (APEGBC) www.apeg.bc.ca
- The BC Institute of Agrologists (BCIA) www.bcia.com
- The BC College of Applied Biology (CAB) www.cabbc.org
- The Association of the Chemical Profession of BC (ACPBC) www.pchembc.ca
- The Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC (ASTTBC) https://asttbc.org

Ensure the Contractor you select:
- Understands the current BC Fire Code and Environmental Management Act regulations pertaining to oil tank removals and oil spills;
- Is reputable and knowledgeable in dealing with Oil Storage Tanks;
- Provides you with a written contract with a specific cost estimate based on property conditions and states clearly what work is to be performed;
- Is insured and licensed to perform work in New Westminster;
- Has WorkSafeBC coverage.

STEP 2 – TANK REMOVAL

Your Contractor must:
- Obtain all required permits before excavation can begin;
    - Tree Permit (City Hall)
    - Oil Tank Permit (New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services)
- Empty oil from the tank and clean out all residues or arrange for someone else to perform this work;
- Excavate the tank piping;

- Dispose of the tank, piping, residues, soil and any remaining oil or special waste at any authorized location;
- Check for signs of leakage via soil samples, tested by a qualified testing laboratory;
- Separate clean soil from any that appears to be contaminated;
- Backfill the hole to grade;
- Provide invoice and/or bill of lading and manifest for oil, special waste and tank disposal and contaminated soil, if any.

You should:
- Observe the tank removal from a safe distance;
- Record any problems that are encountered by the Contractor;
- Take notes and photographs to document the work, even if everything appears to be going well.

STEP 3 – CONTAMINATION MEASUREMENT

The contamination measurement must be a comprehensive soil test performed by a qualified testing laboratory. The laboratory will provide comprehensive testing and reporting of soil condition. You should observe the inspection and obtain written observations from people at the scene, including the Contractor, even if the tank and the piping appear sound and there are no signs of contamination. The contamination measurement includes:

- Recording the condition of the tank, piping and soil;
- Checking the tank and piping for holes;
- Examining the feed line and soil surrounding it;
- Checking the excavated area for visible oil stains or strong odours;
- Noting problem areas on a drawing or map of the excavation;
- Photographing the area to support written documentation;
- Taking 5 (4 walls, 1 under tank) composite soil samples to be analyzed for petroleum constituents.

STEP 4 (IF NECESSARY) – REPORT LEAKS/SPILLS

Provincial Law requires that you, your contractor and/or the Contaminated Site Approved Professional report certain petroleum releases, or threats of release, to the local fire department (New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services) and the BC Ministry of Environment (depending on the nature of volume of the release, as well as contamination levels).

Do not, under any circumstances, allow your Contractor to excavate to the point where the structure of your home is compromised. All excavations over 4 feet deep require shoring. Any soil suspected of being contaminated should be separated from the soil that appears to be clean (so you will not be paying for the disposal of clean soil).

Check with your insurance agent to see if you are covered in the event of an oil spill or leak at your property. Most insurance companies now do not insure leakage from underground tanks.

STEP 5 – KEEP GOOD RECORDS

It is important to maintain good records of the tank removal, inspection process and any necessary clean-up work. Keep them in a safe place with your other important records. You may be asked to produce them later if you sell your property, obtain financing, renew your home insurance or file a claim.

Your documentation should include:
- Shipping records documenting recycling or disposal of the tank, piping, residues, soil and fuel;
- An accurate drawing showing where the tank was located;
- Contamination measurement results, including any analytical results, if samples were taken;
- Documentation of any clean-up work, if performed;
- Your own notes and photos taken during the removal, inspection and clean-up (if necessary);
- Written observations from people at the scene.

New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services will provide the homeowner with a letter of confirmation regarding the work performed once we have received the report from the contractor/owner. This letter, along with a copy of the Contractor's and any environmental report provided will be kept in our database for future reference. Please note if we do not receive the report, (1) a confirmation letter cannot be sent out and (2) our records of the UST removal will remain incomplete.

If you would like more information regarding Residential Underground Storage Tanks, please contact the New Westminster Fire Prevention & Safety Division of the Fire and Rescue Services, Monday to Friday, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Tel: 604-519-1000

Fax: 604-520-7609

E-mail: fire@newwestcity.ca

Please be advised that the Ministry of Environment is to be notified of independent remediation activities. Please refer to the following web page for background information regarding these requirements including the form to be completed at commencement and completion of independent remediation activities:

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/site-remediation/guidance-resources/forms

WEBSITES:	
City of New Westminster Bylaws	www.newwestcity.ca
Fire Services Act	www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/404-BClaws.html
BC Building Code	www.crownpub.bc.ca OR www.bccodes.ca
BC Fire Code	www.crownpub.bc.ca OR www.bccodes.ca
Office of the Fire Commissioner	www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/fire-safety/contact-us
Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy	www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments
Environment & Climate Change Canada	www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change.html

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