

# HANDLING FUELS SAFELY: Residential Fuel Use



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Source Water Protection is a provincial program to protect our municipal drinking water sources (water found in lakes, rivers and underground) from contamination and overuse.



## How do you store and handle your fuel?

Even a small fuel spill can lead to big problems for our water.

In fact, Statistics Canada reports that one litre of gasoline can contaminate up to one million litres of water. This can happen when fuel (such as that used for home heating, to run vehicles, or for manufacturing) is improperly used or stored.

Fuel that's been spilled or that leaks can quickly travel into ground or surface water. From there, the fuel can spread over a large distance, which makes clean up difficult and costly.



## What's the risk?

Fuels contain chemicals that are hazardous to our health.

Home heating oil, for example, contains BTEX which stands for benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene and xylene. These hazardous chemicals are linked to serious health concerns, including certain cancers and birth defects. If fuel gets into our drinking water, it brings BTEX with it, putting us all at risk.

## FUEL TANK SAFETY TIPS

- Have your home heating fuel tank installed by a certified contractor.
- When installing a new tank, choose a double walled tank with secondary containment.
- Have your tank installed away from any floor drains or other openings in the floor to prevent spills from escaping.
- Have your tank inspected annually by a licensed oil burner technician as legally required under the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) and Canadian Standards Association (CSA) code.
- Ensure that your fuel tank is easily accessible for inspection.
- If your fuel tank is installed in a garage, provide proper distance between it and any moving vehicles. And/or install bollards (short vertical posts) to prevent collisions with the tank.
- Install an overfill protection device on your fuel tank.
- Have alarmed drip trays installed under the tank and burner.
- Empty all unused tanks; if you have an abandoned underground tank, you are legally required to remove it and remove any contaminated soil.





## Caring for your fuel tank

Proper care of your fuel tank is in everyone's best interest. Not only can there be a significant environmental impact, but clean up can be costly and is not always covered by your insurance. So it's important that anyone with a fuel tank – whether for home or commercial use – know the warning signs of a leak.

Contact your oil/gas supplier or an oil burner technician if you see or experience any of the following issues:

- Fuel tank legs that are unstable or on a shaky foundation
- You are using more fuel than normal
- Signs of oil in nearby streams, wetlands or ditches
- Signs of dead vegetation over or down slope of the tank
- Evidence of rust, weeping, wet spots or excessive dents on your tank
- Drips or signs of leaking around the filter or valves
- Clogged tank vent or restrictions because of ice, snow, or insect nests (screened vents can prevent insect nest issues)
- The overfill whistle is silent when your tank is being filled
- Spills around the fill or vent pipes



## Managing the risk

Anyone with a property near a municipal well or surface water intake needs to pay special attention when it comes to protecting our sources of drinking water.

In vulnerable areas, you may need to get regulatory approval if you handle or store more than 250 litres of fuel. This depends on the location of your tank, and whether it's above grade, partially below grade, or below grade.

Your local Risk Management Official (RMO) will work with you to determine if your activity poses a threat to drinking water, and if so, how you might manage the risk.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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**South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region**  
[ourwatershed.ca](http://ourwatershed.ca)

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