



Dear Oil Heat Consumer:

The overfilling of home heating oil tanks during delivery is a very troubling – and yet simple to prevent – source of residential oil spills.

While these types of spills occur infrequently, the results can be devastating to both the environment and your property. In addition to the pollution of ground and surface waters (including drinking water wells) and the contamination of living areas, home heating oil spills can cause homeowners enormous headaches. Clean-up costs can run tens of thousands of dollars and are often very time-consuming.

I encourage you to learn more about overfill prevention, and to use the information provided in this brochure to protect yourself, your home and our environment. For further information, log onto the County's website at [www.westchestergov.com/consumer](http://www.westchestergov.com/consumer) and click on the link entitled "Home Heating Oil/Overfill Prevention." This brochure has been developed in conjunction with the Westchester/Putnam Fuel Dealers Association and the New York Oil Heating Association (NYOHA) as a public service.

Andrew J. Spano  
County Executive

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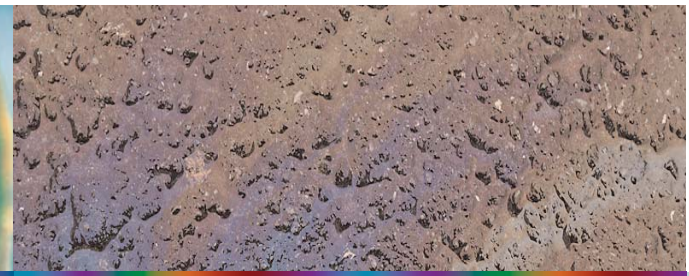
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# Prevent Costly Home Heating Oil Spills

Learn how to protect your  
property and the environment





### **What is an Overfill Prevention Device (OPD)?**

An OPD can take the form of a visible gauge, a vent alarm or a whistle, which is installed onto your heating oil system.

### **How does an OPD work?**

An OPD lets your oil delivery company know when your oil tank is nearing capacity. In the case of a vent alarm or a whistle, as oil passes into your tank and forces air out, a whistle sounds loud enough to be heard by your delivery person. When the tank nears capacity, the whistling stops and acts as a signal to your oil delivery person that the tank is full. If your tank is not equipped with an OPD, there is no definitive way to assess tank fullness during delivery, and the result could be an unintended oil spill.

### **Do I need an OPD?**

Most underground oil tanks do not require an OPD because the piping to the tank allows the oil delivery company to use a pipe attachment that sounds a whistle when the tank nears capacity. If the pipe attachment doesn't work with your system, your tank should be equipped with an OPD. Many tanks, especially newer models, are already equipped with an OPD.

### **How do I find out if my oil tank has an OPD or if my system piping allows for the use of a whistle pipe attachment?**

Some oil companies will note the presence of the OPD right on your delivery ticket. If you are unsure whether your tank has one, simply call your heating oil provider and ask. If you have a device that's operating properly, you're in good shape. Likewise, your oil company can advise you as to whether your system piping is compatible with the whistle pipe attachment. If so, your system will not require an OPD.

### **What if my current heating oil delivery company cannot provide OPD diagnostic or installation services?**

Log on to the County website at [www.westchestergov.com/consumer](http://www.westchestergov.com/consumer). Click on the link entitled "Home Heating Oil/Overfill Prevention" for a list of home heating oil providers who will give you a free OPD inspection and estimate. You can also call the Westchester County Department of Consumer Protection at (914) 995-2155.

### **How much does an OPD cost?**

Vent alarm OPDs are relatively inexpensive and generally cost between \$25-50. Installation costs depend on your heating system.

### **What else can I do to ensure to protect against home heating oil spills?**

Prevention is the best policy. Homeowners can often detect potential problems by making routine, visual inspections of their heating oil systems. Things to look out for include:

- Tank legs that are rusted, unstable or on a precarious foundation (including frost heaves which can make the tank tip over)
- Signs of rust, wet spots, cracked or weeping seams or excessive dents on the tank surface or bent, pitched lines
- Signs of drips or leakage on filter or valves
- A tank located in an area that has a danger of falling snow or ice
- Signs of spills or dead vegetation at the fill or vent pipes or down slope from the tank
- Use of more fuel than normal for current conditions
- Fuel/petroleum odors in basement, crawl space or areas other than the oil burner
- Signs of oil sheens in nearby streams, wetlands or drainage ditches
- Verify that unused openings are properly plugged

If you see any of these conditions, call your service company to determine if there is a problem that requires further attention. Do not attempt to diagnose the problem beyond this visual inspection.