

A MESSAGE FROM KEN ROBINSON

*Vice President of Marketing
and Field Operations*

Fuel oil has provided an excellent source of heat for homes over the past century. Originally, it replaced coal furnaces producing a much easier and cleaner substitute. Today there are many alternatives that are environmentally friendly and highly efficient. The current winner is natural gas.



The problem with natural gas is that it requires gas lines and these are not available everywhere, so many homes continue to use fuel oil as their heating source. But, as gas lines are built and people have the chance,

they will usually retrofit their homes with new furnaces. It is, however, during these retrofits that we can experience some of the worst spills.

Once the tank is removed, if the fill spout remains, basements can be inadvertently filled leaving a disaster that can end with the demolition of the home. In other cases the tanks rupture or have been leaking for many years leaching into the surrounding soil. Once this has occurred, extensive remediation is required including excavation of basements, underpinning of the foundation and removal of all contaminated materials in the vicinity.

This month's Leader outlines a case of a leaking tank, the resulting damage to the property and the remediation required.

DEALING WITH DOMESTIC OIL SPILLS

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on domestic oil spills and their liability. Domestic oil spills can be very costly with respect to damage of property, site remediation and third party liability. The cost of remediation can often exceed the value of the home and create a great deal of personal stress for the homeowner.

The primary cause of domestic oil spills is the fuel supply storage system which includes an oil tank, a supply line, a burner or burners, multiple lines to hot water heaters and an oil supplier.

While leaking oil tanks are the main cause of oil leaks, lines which have been accidentally severed or left unhooked for maintenance reasons as well as failures of pumps and burners can also be the source of the oil spill.

When tanks are installed they are usually left uninspected for years with no attention paid to their replacement until a problem occurs. Tanks also have traditionally been installed with a lowest cost mentality, usually giving the homeowner no choice in the matter.



Oil tank clearly showing hole.

Oil has traditionally been stored in thin walled 14-gauge steel tanks, situated either in the homeowner's basement or on the exterior of their homes. These tanks usually have a warranty lifespan of 3 to 6 years after which, the tanks should be replaced. Considerable rusting and corrosion starts very early in the lifespan of the average steel tank and usually occurs from the inside out.

While outside tanks are subjected to the physical damage during winter time due to snow and ice, inside tanks are susceptible to accumulation of water on the tank bottom after moisture in warm air inside the tank condenses,

following a new fuel fill up on cold winter mornings.

Homeowners need to be aware of this situation when they are upgrading/replacing their tanks and consider purchasing a 12-gauge tank which has a thicker wall and utilizing some of the new more efficient products which are now available. These tanks usually have a safe 10 year life span.

Warning devices, overspill catchers and certification of thin walled tanks in current use should be required. Regulatory action is already in place and new guidelines and policies on handling spills have evolved such as "The Domestic Fuel Oil Spill Policy", which has added regimentation with respect to reporting requirements.



Working with PDS Canada



Professional Standards

- Every franchisee has IICRC and Mould Remediation Certification
- Emergency Response Program
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Case Study – New Reported Oil Spill –

At the end of the summer a couple living in a small trailer in a trailer park noticed that their outside oil tank that holds about 800 litres of oil, was almost empty. They called the oil company to have a technician come out and fill it. The technician arrived, bled out the lines and filled the oil tank.

Just before Christmas, the couple noticed that their oil tank was almost empty and called the oil company to send out a technician to refill the oil tank. The technician arrived, bled out the lines, and again refilled the tank.



A look at the neighbor's property. Their fence and tree may soon become an issue.

Two weeks later on New Year's Eve the couple yet again noticed that the oil tank was empty and called the oil company. This time the oil company's reaction was to send out a technician to check for an oil leak. The technician determined that there must be an oil leak and requested that the homeowners call their insurance company who in turn called PDS of Renfrew County.

When PDS of Renfrew County technicians arrived on the scene, they sensed a strong smell of hydrocarbons. When checking the oil tank they read the label which clearly indicated that the tank was intended for indoor use only.

They next called the Spills Action Centre and the Ministry of the Environment. The MOE indicated that this was not in their jurisdiction but in that of the property owners. The SAC advised that an immediate response for spill control and remediation was required.

As per procedure, technicians pumped the tank dry and removed it. An oil spot about 6" in diameter was identified so they immediately dug a 10" deep trench around it to contain the spill and put in a containment boom with inside surface oil containment pads.



The test pit where the hole was dug directly under the location of the leak from the oil tank.

New Year's Eve 2005 Petawawa, Ontario

The initial site examination indicated almost no free product or heavy residue on the surface soils and no surface staining beyond 60 inches of the actual point of release. Since this oil spill took place in Petawawa, they knew the soil type was a sandy soil and there was a clear indication that the heating oil went straight down aided either by lack of frost or sandy soils.

Next the TSSA, the licensing body for all fuel and equipment suppliers, was contacted and they sent out a technician to inspect the situation.

The next day Dean Fuisz, owner of PDS of Renfrew County next contacted an environmental clean-up contractor, who was on-site by early morning. A Test Hole at the spill site was drilled 11 feet deep and samples taken indicated the presence of hydrocarbons.

The site was then prepared for the arrival of WESA, an environmental health and safety engineering group and the insurance company sent out their own engineer to do a site assessment. Everyone had the same focus – to minimize the exposure as much as possible.

Testing wells were dug all around the property and all but one indicated the presence of hydrocarbons. In this case the mobile home was totally removed, perimeter fencing was put in place and the entire area was excavated. Soil was removed to an 18 foot depth which was taken to a landfill site and this property area was replaced with infill. There was also on-site water treatment whereby the standing water was pumped into a container and separated from the oil.

Although the PDS portion of the job is complete, outside perimeter wells are still being tested on a periodic basis for hydrocarbons by the insurer. TSSA is still investigating the site and charges may be placed against the different parties involved.



Dean Fuisz, PDS of Renfrew County

CSI – Risk Free Services

CSI stands for Completion Services Inc. It is an independent corporation owned and funded by all authorized Paul Davis Restoration's offices.

This warranty is unique in our industry as it allows us to provide our services risk-free.

Backed by the CSI Guaranty, a standard customer survey is used along with signed work orders and Completion Certificates.

CSI certificates are issued yearly at the insurer's request, and cover individual per job occurrences up to \$50,000.

This program guarantees job completion and payment and it also guarantees risk-free service for the Insurer.

PACK-OUT SERVICES

Paul Davis Systems has integrated Assured Software's Pack-Out Inventory Program with our PDS pack-out and cleaning procedures. After contents leave the insured's property we are able to provide a detailed content listing with integrated photos.

This list breaks out damaged and salvaged items. It lists and photographs existing and pre-existing conditions and, it can be provided in many electronic formats.

For the contents being cleaned, the process is streamlined keeping a full chain of custody as the contents travel from the home to the cleaning facility where they are cleaned, stored and returned.



Well testing for oil.



On-site water treatment where the standing water is separated from the oil.

24-HOUR NATIONAL RESPONSE CENTRE 800-661-5975

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The Leader
PDS Canada

Meet Randy Benjamin PDS of Moncton

As the owner of a cleaning and restoration company with several years experience in the construction industry, Randy decided to join the PDS network in April 2006. Our goal is to provide high quality service on time and on budget with 24-hour Emergency Response.

PDS of Moncton's certified estimators and project managers will provide accurate and professional estimates within 48 hours of a loss. PDS of Moncton is proud to announce that it operates as a fully bilingual office.



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DID YOU KNOW?

The lines between ceramic tiles are called grout lines and should be sealed every few years in showers or tubs to ensure water resistance.

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