
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Having a Vent Alarm on Your Residential Heating Oil Tank Can Prevent Costly Oil Spills

Having a vent alarm on your residential heating oil tank can minimize the chance of your heating oil dealer overfilling your heating oil tank and help avoid an oil spill. Oil spills can result in significant damage to your property and to the environment that can be quite expensive to clean up.

What is a vent alarm? A vent alarm is a small device that is typically installed between your tank and vent pipe. It signals the person filling the tank that it is full.

How does a vent alarm system work? When oil is pumped into your tank, air is displaced from inside the tank through the vent pipe. As air passes through the vent and the attached vent alarm, it makes a whistling sound which stops when the tank is full.

Why should I have a vent alarm system? A vent alarm system will help to prevent a release of oil into your cellar or to the environment due to accidental over-pumping of oil into a full tank. The cost to clean up an accidental release of heating oil can range from one thousand dollars to several hundred thousand dollars, and can take from several weeks to several years to clean up, depending on the magnitude of the problem. For this reason, a vent alarm system is required by state fire code for new installations.

How do I know if I have a vent alarm? Ask your fuel oil dealer or your heating specialist if there is one installed and if it's operating properly the next time you have your fuel oil storage tank filled.

How much does a vent alarm system cost? Depending on the configuration of your tank, the price of a vent alarm ranges from \$10 to \$30 (plus installation). Your oil dealer or a plumbing and heating contractor can install the vent alarm. In some cases, the dealer may perform the installation at no cost to help you comply with this requirement and to ensure that fuel deliveries to your tank can be made with minimum risk of environmental contamination and liability.

Did you know that having a vent alarm will make you eligible for state financial assistance in cleaning up oil spills from your heating oil system? The Fuel Oil Discharge Cleanup Fund (RSA 146-E) provides financial assistance to owners of on-premise-use facilities for the cleanup of fuel oil released to the environment from heating oil tanks or related piping. On-premise-use facilities include heating oil tanks and piping located at single family homes, apartments, commercial buildings, and industrial facilities. RSA 146-E is also the state law which requires all

on-premise-use facilities be equipped with an overfill vent alarm system to be eligible for this financial assistance.

Who do I call for more information? Contact your heating oil dealer, your heating and plumbing contractor, or the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services at (603) 271-3899.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this Fact Sheet is current as of May 13, 2014. Statutory or regulatory changes that may occur after May 13, 2014, may cause part or all of the information to be invalid. If there are any questions concerning the status of the information, please contact NHDES at (603) 271-3899.