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Storing oil at your home or business

1. Overview

You have to follow certain regulations if you have an oil storage container at your home, business or farm.

Oil storage containers include tanks, drums, intermediate bulk containers (IBCs) and mobile containers called 'bowsers'.

The person responsible for the property or premises is usually legally responsible for the oil storage container, eg the homeowner, business owner or site manager.

Which regulations to follow

The regulations are different depending on where you store your oil.

At your home

You normally have to follow building regulations if you have an oil storage container installed at your home (<https://www.gov.uk/oil-storage-regulations-and-safety/home>).

If your storage container can hold 3,501 litres or more, you must follow the regulations for businesses (<https://www.gov.uk/oil-storage-regulations-and-safety/business>).

At your business

You have to follow oil storage regulations if the container at your business can hold 201 litres or more of certain types of oil (<https://www.gov.uk/oil-storage-regulations-and-safety/business>).

The regulations for businesses also apply to public sector buildings like schools, hospitals, churches and residential care homes.

At your farm

You have to follow different regulations depending on whether you're storing oil:

- for heat and power for agriculture (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/storing-silage-slurry-and-agricultural-fuel-oil>), eg to fuel your tractor or run a grain dryer
- to heat your farmhouse (<https://www.gov.uk/oil-storage-regulations-and-safety/home>)
- for a separate part of your business (<https://www.gov.uk/oil-storage-regulations-and-safety/business>), eg to fuel vehicles you hire out

Checking and labelling your tank

You should get your oil storage container inspected every year by a professional.

The person inspecting your tank will let you know when you should replace it.

Oil Care suggest that you look at your oil tank (<http://oilcare.org.uk/look-after-your-oil/regular-tank-checks/>) at least once a month, and learn what to do if you have an oil leak or spill. (<http://oilcare.org.uk/dealing-with-spills/>)

2. Storing oil at your home

You must meet building regulations (<https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval>) if you have a new or replacement oil storage container installed at your home in England, eg to fuel your cooker or central heating.

Building regulations are different if your home is in Wales

(<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/buildingregs/publications/part-j-heat-appliances/?lang=en>), Scotland

(<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards>) or Northern Ireland.

(<https://www.dfpni.gov.uk/articles/building-regulations-technical-booklets>)

If your storage container can hold 3,501 litres or more, you must follow the regulations for businesses (<https://www.gov.uk/oil-storage-regulations-and-safety/business>).

Choosing someone to install your tank

You should choose someone who's registered with a 'Competent Person' scheme (<https://www.gov.uk/building-regulations-approval/use-a-competent-person-scheme>). They can self-certify that their work complies with building regulations and can deal with building control issues, like objections.

If you don't use someone registered with a 'Competent Person' scheme, you'll have to get a Building Control Notice from your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) and arrange and pay for an inspection yourself.

Without approval you won't have the certificates of compliance you may need when you want to sell your home.

Penalties

The person installing your tank could be prosecuted and fined if they don't comply (<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/responsibilities/buildingregulations/failure>) with building regulations.

You're also responsible for making sure their work meets the regulations. Your local authority could make you pay for faulty work to be fixed.

Catching oil leaks and spills

The person installing your tank will do a risk assessment, and they'll let you know if your tank has to have secondary containment (a 'bund'). The bund must:

- hold 110% of the tank's capacity
- be impermeable to oil and water

You'll need a bund if your tank's in any of the following places:

- where oil spills could run into an open drain or a loose manhole cover
- where the tank vent pipes can't be seen when the tank's being filled, eg because the delivery tanker is parked too far away
- within 10 metres of coastal waters or inland fresh waters like lakes or streams
- within 50 metres of a drinking water source, eg wells, boreholes or springs
- where oil spills could run over hard ground and reach coastal waters, inland fresh waters or a drinking water source
- in the inner zone of groundwater source protection zone 1 (http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?x=531500.0&y=181500.0&topic=groundwater&ep=map&scale=5&location=London,%20City%20of%20London&lang=_e&layerGroups=default&distance=&textonly=off)

You'll also need a bund if your tank can hold more than 2,500 litres of oil.

Your oil storage container must have a sticker in a prominent position that tells you how to look after your oil and what to do if you have a spill. The person installing your new tank will put this on - but you can find out how to order a new sticker. (<http://oilcare.org.uk/dealing-with-spills/stickers/>)

3. Storing oil at your business

You must follow the regulations for businesses if your oil container can hold 201 litres or more of:

- petrol
- diesel
- biofuels
- kerosene
- vegetable oil and plant-based oils, eg sunflower oil or aromatherapy oil - including waste cooking oil
- synthetic oils, eg motor oil - including waste oil
- oils used as solvents
- biodegradable oils, eg lubricating or hydraulic oils
- liquid bitumen-based products, eg waterproofing or damp proofing products, or coatings for a road surface

The regulations don't apply to:

- liquid petroleum gas (LPG)
- hydrocarbon products that are solid when unheated, like bitumen
- solvents that aren't oil based, eg trichloroethylene
- aromatic hydrocarbons like benzene and toluene
- waste mineral oils drained from vehicles, and mixtures of diesel and petrol that can't be used as vehicle fuel

You must follow different regulations in Scotland (<http://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/pollution-control/scottish-oil-storage-regulations/>), Northern Ireland (<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/oil-storage>) and Wales. (<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/waterflooding/oil-storage-standards/?lang=en>)

Other exceptions

You don't have to follow oil storage regulations if your oil is:

- on a farm and you use it for heat and power for agriculture (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/storing-silage-slurry-and-agricultural-fuel-oil>) or for your farmhouse (<https://www.gov.uk/oil-storage-regulations-and-safety/home>)
- stored for distribution to other places
- in use, eg lubrication in a hydraulic system

The regulations don't apply if your storage containers are:

- underground
- in a building that would capture leaking oil - contact your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>) to find out if you have to meet any extra fire safety regulations
- at a refinery
- at a premises for onward distribution of oil - but not a premises which sells oil directly to end users or a premises that uses oil

Check if you need an environmental permit (<https://www.gov.uk/environmental-permit-check-if-you-need-one>) if you're storing certain waste oils.

Choosing someone to install your oil storage tank

You should choose someone who's registered with a 'Competent Person' scheme.

(<http://www.competentperson.co.uk/>)

You're responsible for any pollution caused by problems with your oil storage container. You need to know the regulations about oil storage containers (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/storing-oil-at-a-home-or-business>), including where it's located and how it's protected.

Penalties

You can be fined if you don't follow the oil storage regulations.

The Environment Agency can also serve an anti-pollution works notice to make you bring your tank up to legal requirements.

Get advice

Contact the Environment Agency if you have a question about following oil storage regulations in England.

Environment Agency enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Telephone: 03708 506 506

Textphone: 03702 422 549

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Find out about call charges (<https://www.gov.uk/call-charges>)

If your business is outside England, contact one of the following:

- Natural Resources Wales (<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/contact-us/>)
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (<http://www.sepa.org.uk/contact/>)
- Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) (http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/contact_us.htm)