



DEALING WITH AN OIL SPILL?

HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW...

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INTRODUCTION

A spill of diesel or kerosene from your oil tank can be dangerous for the water environment, human health and the wider environment.

This book offers vital information on the dangers of an oil spill and advice on what you should do in response to a spillage.



EARLY SIGNS OF AN OIL SPILL

We'll begin by outlining the early symptoms of an oil spill, as many homeowners may not realise their unit is leaking until it is already too late. If you discover any of the symptoms below contact our oil spill response team to book a consultation.

- Oil stains around tank.
- Constant smell of solvent, petrol or oil.
- Bulges, cracks, discolouring or rust around tank.
- Plants growing too close to tank.
- Stained grass on particular areas of the garden.
- Unusually high oil consumption.

HOW DAMAGING CAN AN OIL SPILL BE TO MY PROPERTY?



Every oil spill is different, and the impact of a fuel leak can vary from site to site.

Although releases from residential heating oil tanks are often extremely problematic, and the clean-up will gradually become more complex the longer the spill is left untreated.

Here's some of the common consequences of a domestic oil leak:

- ▶ Causes harmful fumes inside properties.
- ▶ Contaminates drinking water supplies. Oil can impact the underground plastic water pipes causing bad tastes and smells in drinking water in the neighbourhood.
- ▶ Kills garden plants and vegetation.
- ▶ Soaks into the brick or stonework of buildings.
- ▶ Can spread through drains and affect the operation of sewage treatment works and septic tanks.
- ▶ Spreads through the ground and affect neighbouring properties.
- ▶ Pollutes rivers, streams and ground water surrounding the property.

As owners and occupiers of a property we all have a legal obligation to prevent pollution or to clean up pollution when it occurs either on our property or migrates into neighbouring properties. Your property could also be permanently devalued without a correct validation certification.

AVADA Environmental's experience in domestic remediation allows us to draw on extensive knowledge to ensure the most effective remedial strategy is recommended and implied effectively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our client's properties.

CAN A HEATING OIL SPILL HARM MY HEALTH?

Yes! An oil leak in your home should not be viewed lightly and you should take immediate action if you have one, as it can cause severe damage to a property as well as threaten human health.

The effects of oil spills on humans may be direct and indirect, depending on the type of contact with the oil spill.

By inhaling harmful fumes – since petroleum products have many volatile compounds which are emitted as gases from spilled oil, the air becomes contaminated with those volatile oil products or vapours producing specific odours.

Even when odours are not felt, a health risk may exist for some individual compounds if residents are exposed for a long time.

Of course, when the smell is obvious the health risk increases. Exposure to heating oil can cause some short, or long-term health effects if the volume or concentration of heating oil is great enough.

Common symptoms associated with acute (short-term) exposure to heating oil are:

- Eye irritation
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Euphoria
- Loss of coordination and disorientation

Prolonged or widespread contact with the skin may cause severe irritation, redness and swelling. Chronic (long-term) exposure to heating oil may produce serious health impacts. If symptoms are severe or persist, consult a doctor.

Always avoid touching heating oil with exposed skin or inhaling oil fumes, and keep children, pets and other family members away from areas where they can be exposed to oil fumes.



DO I NEED TO MOVE OUT DURING OIL SPILL CLEAN-UP?

Every year, there are thousands of reported pollution incidents across Ireland and the UK caused by leaking or spilt oil, with many of these incidents occurring on residential properties.

A spill of diesel or kerosene from your oil tank can be dangerous for the water environment, human health and the wider environment, which means the remediation (clean-up) needs to be taken very seriously.

AVADA Environmental has responded to many domestic oil spills across the Ireland and the UK since our company first formed in 2013, and one of the primary questions we tend to be asked by our clients is whether they will have to evacuate their property during the clean-up process.

The impact of a fuel leak can vary site to site. Where the leaked fuel impacts building structures and buried services (such as water supply pipes) there can be a significant impact on residents that may require the occupiers to be moved out of the property when clean-up is undertaken, particularly if the levels of oil vapours in the air exceeds threshold.

Evacuation would only be recommended if our team felt that there was a threat to human health, as exposure to heating oil can cause both short-term and long-term health effects if the volume or concentration of heating oil is great enough.

The chosen device we use to record kerosene, diesel and petrol VOCs from soil and from the indoor air of contaminated properties is the high performance photoionisation detector (PID), which gives our clients a clear insight into the extent of the damage and whether the levels of vapours within their house could be putting their health in danger.

At AVADA Environmental we have a highly skilled Oil Spill Response Team, that continuously aims to deal with problematic oil spills, whilst causing as little disruption to our client's everyday lives as possible.



DOES HOME INSURANCE COVER OIL TANK LEAKS?

The majority of residents who have domestic oil tanks assume that their home insurance policy would cover the clean-up costs following a spill. However, this is not always the case, some policies do not cover the environmental clean-up costs you could face if your property is polluted.

We recommend that homeowners ensure both the immediate aftermath of an oil leak and the costs of any subsequent site investigations and clean-up are covered.

Not only is the oil valuable, the clean-up costs following a spill or leak can be significant. Not all policies cover spills resulting from a lack of maintenance; pollution that affects your neighbours; or environmental damage caused by a spill.

How to establish if you are properly covered by your insurance

Homeowners with oil and fuel tanks should work with their insurance advisers to check their general insurance policies. Any gaps and potential for ambiguity in their cover can then be identified.

Particular attention should be paid to the following areas:

1. Is Pollution Covered?

Pollution or contamination can sometimes be excluded completely or included with a limit. Even when given, pollution or contamination cover is almost always restricted to physical loss or damage that occurs following a sudden identifiable, unintended and unexpected incident which takes place in its entirety at a specific time and place during the period of insurance.

2. Potential Complications

Is the land and water at your premises included within the definition of insured property in your policy? If so, for what value or limit? Occasionally they are not. Oil and fuel tanks and supply pipework are often located outside, if they leak or fail and pollute land or water (including groundwater) within your grounds, would the clean-up costs be covered and if so, under what circumstances?

Don't assume – be sure you're insured!

In conclusion, it is all too easy to assume that your property is covered by your existing insurance policies. Time spent checking your existing cover will be wisely spent if it saves you the trouble and financial consequences of being hit by an unwanted and uninsured, claim, however unlikely you think that may be.

Homeowners should always be aware that some insurance companies may declare a policy void if a heating oil tank is in a poor state of repair, or if there is evidence that a leak has been present for some time and ignored, so it's important that you inspect your tank regularly to avoid these clauses and to help spot any symptoms of a leak at the earliest possible stage.

Dealing with a Neighbours Oil Leak?

Your home is your fortress. But how would you address the situation if it were to be damaged by a neighbour accidentally?

It's not unusual for homeowners to suffer damage to their property at the hands of a neighbour, particularly in the event of an oil spill, as kerosene will migrate rapidly through soil and water after being absorbed into the ground.

Over the past number of years AVADA Environmental has been called out to countless jobs where an oil spill has originated from a neighbouring property, with some clients even suffering from the consequences of an oil spill from properties over 300 yards away

WHAT SHOULD YOUR FIRST MOVE BE?

Call us! If you've noticed some of the early symptoms of a spill, like a strong smell of oil around your property or stains on your garden, and have suspicions that it's coming from a neighbour's property the first task will be to prevent the kerosene from spreading, limiting any further damage to your home.

This is not a task that can be carried out by yourself or an unqualified worker. Some people tend to try and treat a spill themselves before seeking help with products like washing up liquid and other detergents, which will only make the problem worse. You'll require a full site assessment from an experienced and accredited Oil Spill Response Team, possibly followed by emergency containment measures.

Our team would be able to determine how the oil is getting into your property through our investigations. And after all containment measures have been put in place, we would proceed to finding the extent of the spill.

HOW DOES THE INSURANCE WORK?

Dealing with the legal matters associated to a pollution incident can be overbearing for any homeowner.

Each spill is surrounded with unique circumstances, and numerous questions must be raised when dealing with an oil spill that is sourced from a neighbouring property. The source will need to be identified, the extent of the damage will need to be noted and other issues like negligence, trespass or nuisance can come into the equation.

Sometimes with a third-party spill you can use your own insurance policy, other times it will be in your best interest to go directly after the polluter when pursuing a claim. Every case is different but making the wrong decision could lead to you getting less than you're entitled to.

AVADA Environmental has dealt with hundreds of third-party spills, and we can help relieve you of the stresses that arise when dealing with the claim and ensure you get fully compensated. We will work closely with most insurers and assist you by providing a detailed report and quotation for any remedial work required, which can then be presented to them for review.

WHY CHOOSE US IN THE EVENT OF AN OIL SPILL?

Oil pollution will not only damage your property, it could devalue it and potentially harm your health and wellbeing if it's not cleaned up correctly.

AVADA Environmental can provide the help you need if you are suffering from the consequences of an oil spill at your premises, from the initial investigation through to the completion of the clean-up.

We have dealt with countless oil leaks across the UK and Ireland since our company first launched in 2013, and we've got the resources to deal with a wide variety of issues ranging from domestic oil leaks to major spills at commercial facilities or agricultural premises.

Rapid Response

If you suspect you've got an oil leak at your property, you need to act quickly. Don't put off taking action or assume the problem will go away. The quicker the leak can be dealt with, the less oil will be lost and further damage can be minimised.

We operate a 24-hour emergency response service to oil or chemical spills across the UK and Ireland, and you can always reach us by calling our 24-hour emergency line on 0800 9174 999 if you're calling from the UK or 1800 567 999 if you're calling from the Republic of Ireland.

Quality Services

AVADA Environmental is an accredited oil spill response contractor. Using companies accredited under obligatory schemes gives you confidence that the firm has invested in staff, equipment and materials and that they hold the correct waste management and remediation licences.



Friendly & Knowledgeable Support

We understand how stressful it can be for any person when dealing with the aftermath of an oil spill on their premises, and as well as minimising disruption, our staff always put great effort into engaging with clients and keeping them well-informed throughout the remediation process.

Expert Advice & Guidance

Oil spills can be complex incidents to deal with and you may hear a lot of conflicting advice from various sources. We provide impartial and straightforward advice that will help you to understand the problem and we'll offer exemplary guidance on all legal matters associated with a pollution incident.

CONTACT US

If you would like to learn more about the services we can provide, please contact us on:

TELEPHONE: 028 3010 0121

24/7 HELPLINE: (UK) 0800 9174 999 (ROI) 1800 567 999

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