

# Heating & Diesel Oil Theft

Theft of heating and diesel oil has been a problem for many years and the Police have always noticed an increase in this type of crime whenever the price of crude oil rises. A rise in the price of fuel at the petrol pump inevitably leads to a rise in the cost of heating oil. This makes oil a more attractive proposition for the thief and they are now actively targeting fuel tanks at farms, transport depots and domestic properties. The thief may be using the oil for their own central heating or selling it on at a handsome profit.

These tanks can contain many thousands of pounds worth of oil and it therefore makes good sense to take a few precautions to protect them. The purpose of this leaflet is to give the reader a few ideas about what can be done to make life more difficult for the thief.

**OFTEC** or the "Oil Firing Technical Association for the petroleum industry" offers advice and guidance for those who use and store oil at their premises. There are certain rules and regulations that may apply to you and OFTEC will help clarify these for you. They can be reached at [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org). They also produce an "easy guide to domestic oil storage" which is a very straightforward and useful document.

## Siting your oil tank

The position of the tank can have a significant effect on how hard a target it is in the eyes of the thief. If the tank is close to the house, with one or more windows capable of giving a view of it, then the thief may consider the chances of being seen too high. If the tank is close to a road, path, drive or alleyway then it will be a far easier target. Hiding the tank behind the garage, shed or some other type of outbuilding is fairly commonplace, but it does give the thief the advantage.



Not many oil tanks are works of art so who wants a tank in full view? While it may not be desirable, or legal, to have the tank close to the house, positioning it within line of sight of a window but still within regulations may discourage would-be thieves. Of course this will not only be a major consideration when a new tank is to be installed but may be necessary if the tank has been targeted before. They do need to be within a reasonable distance of the road otherwise the oil supply company may not be able to refill it for you.

## Control switches

Control switches that control the flow of oil should be turned off and the electricity supply isolated when the tank is not in use

## Padlocks

A thief will usually come equipped with a limited range of tools to attack your tank so it's worth spending a little more on good quality locks. Close shackle padlocks are the best as they offer most resistance to the most popular of burglar tools; the bolt cropper! Due to their design, close shackle padlocks have very little of the metal hoop (shackle) exposed and bolt croppers cannot get a good grip. Remember that buying a padlock is like buying a car, the more you pay the better the quality and the longer it will last.

## Oil level gauges

Remote electronic oil level gauges are now available which will set off an audible alarm if the oil level in the tank suddenly drops or falls below a quarter full. These gauges can be located in the kitchen, or perhaps a utility room to warn of any potential problem. There are two or three different versions on the market at the moment and cost between £70 and £100.

## Security lights

Security lights can have a very positive effect and make any property a much harder target for the thief. It's not always necessary to floodlight the area with high power beams, as a more subtle level of lighting may be all that is needed.

Low energy 'dusk 'til dawn' lights positioned close to the tank should, in most cases, provide sufficient light to illuminate any suspicious activity. This type of light can be both effective and inexpensive. High powered lights can be used but care should be taken not to cause any nuisance to neighbours or road users.

