

SECURING YOUR OIL TANK



Advice from Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit



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Introduction

Theft of domestic heating and commercial diesel oil often increases when the price of crude oil rises. Thieves target fuel tanks at businesses, farms, transport depots and homes. They may use it for their own purposes or sell it on at a handsome profit.

While we are working hard to bring these criminals to justice, there are steps you can take to protect yourself from fuel theft. Oil is a valuable commodity, so it makes good sense to take precautions and invest a small amount of money, if you can, to prevent thieves targeting your tank.

Location of your oil tank

The position and appearance of the tank can have a significant effect on how difficult it is to target in the eyes of the thief. If the tank is close to your house, with one or more windows overlooking it, a thief may consider their chances of being seen too high. If the tank is close to a road, path, drive or alleyway, it is far easier to target. Hiding your tank behind a garage, shed or outbuilding is an option, but it can give a thief the advantage of working unseen.

Generally, oil tanks aren't particularly aesthetically pleasing, so it makes sense to hide it out of view. While it may not be desirable, or legal, to have the tank close to the house, a compromise location would be sensible. Of course this is not only a major consideration when a new tank is installed, but may be necessary if the tank has been targeted before. Tanks must be within a reasonable distance of the road to enable your fuel supplier to refill it for you.

Padlocks

A thief will usually come equipped with tools to attack your tank so it's worth investing in good quality locks.

Close shackle padlocks are most effective as they offer most resistance to tools such as bolt croppers. Due to their design, close shackled 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 it will be and the longer it will last. Your lock will need to be weatherproof if it is going to be outdoors.

If possible, padlocks should be shrouded to make bolt cropping of locks or brackets difficult for an offender.



Consider camouflage



- Surround your oil tank with tall plants if the area gets adequate sun. Leave a space of several feet between the tank and the bushes. Bushes like juniper, holly, lilac or boxwood provide width and height when fully grown as well as looking attractive. Use evergreen bushes for full coverage at all times of the year.
- Install a trellis fence and cover it with hanging vines such as cucumber or trumpet vine. Place a gate on one side to allow access for oil refilling or repair. Allow several years for the vines and plants to reach full growth and provide the best coverage.
- Use prefabricated fence panels to construct a fence that goes around the entire oil tank. If the oil tank is against a building, make it a three-sided fence with two sides attached to the wall. Place a door in the fence for access. You could camouflage the panels by planting shrubs at the base of the panels.

Control switches

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

Securing your oil tank

Oil level gauges

Remote electronic oil level gauges are now available. They set off an alarm if the oil level in the tank suddenly drops or falls below a quarter full. These gauges are located inside your house to warn you of any potential problem.

Devices that send an alert to your mobile phone are also available. There are different versions on the market costing between £70 and £150 – considerably less than the value of the fuel in your tank.

Compound Security Systems supply a fuel alarm system that carries 'Police Approved Specification' accreditation, which you might want to consider.

Visit www.compoundsecurity.co.uk and search for fuel and oil tank security.

Security lights

It is strongly advised that you install PIR (motion activated) lighting in the area of your tank. Static lighting can aid an offender in their crime, whereas lighting that goes on and off is likely to alert you or passers by to someone being outside, and is also likely to deter an offender.

Gravel

Consider gravelling the access route to your tank, or around the tank. This will make noise when it is walked over. This could serve to alert you and deter a potential thief.

Defensive planting

Defensive planting is nature's way of helping to reduce crime. Thieves will not want to force their way through or over a thorny hedge such as hawthorn, berberis or pyracantha.

Additionally, even the smallest trace of blood or shred of ripped clothing could help the police identify an offender who targets your property through DNA.

We have produced a leaflet that shows suitable types of plants for defensive planting. If you would like a copy, contact Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit on **101** ext. **800 3011** or download Securing Your Home from www.nottinghamshire.police.uk/library in the Advice and Support section.



Fencing

A wooden or metal fence, trellis or wall can give significant protection to the tank but bear in mind that the oil tanker driver will need access to fill the tank. A metal grill or cage with a lockable access point across the top of this wall or fence can further improve security. The wall or fence should be as close to the tank and as high as possible. Of course a trellis could also be decorated with defensive planting as illustrated in the previous section.

CCTV

The use of CCTV as a crime prevention and detection tool has grown immensely in recent years. It could play a part in the protection of your oil tank. But before investing in equipment, make an assessment of your needs.

- What do you hope to achieve by using CCTV? Yes it can be a deterrent, but it doesn't physically prevent theft occurring where physical measures or alarms might.
- How much am I prepared to spend? CCTV can sometimes be more expensive than alternative and more appropriate measures.
- Is there a reasonable level of light where the cameras will operate, or do you need to think about using cameras with low light capability? Bear in mind that most thefts occur at night.
- What are you going to record the captured images on? Digital recording is the most effective.
- How are you going to provide the police with any evidence you may capture?

You must ensure that cameras don't overlook your neighbours' private property or focus solely on pavements or public roads.

Nottinghamshire Alert

Nottinghamshire Alert is a system which allows Nottinghamshire Police, Neighbourhood Watch in Nottinghamshire and other organisations that work for the public to send community safety messages to you quickly and efficiently.

If you are interested in getting updates on major incidents, advice on crime prevention and community safety and alerts about criminals operating in your area, make sure you are registered with the system.

You can report antisocial behaviour in your area and receive responses from police about the incident you have reported and find out how to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme or set up your own in your street by registering.

What do I get?

- A totally free service — you can control your message settings and choose to receive alerts via email, text message to your mobile phone or recorded voicemail. You can unsubscribe at any time.
- Information about crime trends, incidents and appeals from authorised police officers and police staff.
- Report suspicious and antisocial behaviour (not crime), receive updates and responses about them.
- Start, manage or request to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in your area.
- Configure how, when and which messages you'd like to receive.

If you want to know more about Nottinghamshire Alert, contact Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit.

Tel: 101, extension 800 3011

Email: nottinghamshirealert@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk

To register for Nottinghamshire Alert, visit **www.nottinghamshirealert.co.uk**

If you would like a paper copy of the registration form, call **101** or visit your local police station to request one.

For more advice on crime prevention contact

Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit
Arrow Centre
Hucknall
Nottinghamshire
NG15 8AY

Tel: **101**

Tell us what priorities you want your local police to focus on with our online survey

www.neighbourhoodprioritysurvey.co.uk

If you have information about criminals operating in your area, call Crimestoppers anonymously on

0800 555 111