



What Homeowners Need to Know about Fuel Oil Spills and Flooding

When you can see or smell fuel oil or another petroleum product in flood waters it is important to clean it up properly, but your safety is the primary concern.

When there is an oil or petroleum spill:

1. **Call the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Spill Hotline** at (800) 457-7362 immediately to report the spill and to ask for assistance.
2. **Do not pump oily water from your home to your yard, the street, or other property.** You can do more harm than good. NYSDEC can provide assistance to remove the oil and oily water.
3. **Gather these materials** if you and NYSDEC have determined that you can do the cleanup work yourself:
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves (rubber, latex, or nitrile), long sleeved shirts and long pants, boots, goggles and respiratory protection (such as an N95 mask).
 - Oil-absorbent pads are best for soaking up small pools/puddles of oil. You can find these at auto or marine supply stores, but diapers or other absorbent pads can also be used.
 - Absorbent materials (such as cat litter, sawdust, granulated clay) to soak up residual oil on floors and surfaces.
 - Plastic tarp to hold the items that must be cleaned or discarded.
 - Portable, non-oscillating fans to bring fresh air into the home and exhaust contaminated air out. They also speed the drying process.
 - Camera so you can take pictures. This can help you create an inventory for your insurance claim.
4. **Put on personal protective equipment before beginning the cleanup.** Exposure to oil and oil vapor (touching, breathing or swallowing) can cause a variety of symptoms (e.g., eye irritation, nausea, headaches, increased blood pressure, breathing problems). Preventing your exposure can protect your health. If you or a household member experiences health effects, do not continue cleaning. Seek medical help if symptoms persist or worsen.
5. **Use absorbent pads** to soak up small oil pools floating on water surfaces, and absorbent materials on other surfaces to limit oil spreading. A thick or continuous layer of oil will require specialized equipment: call NYSDEC (800) 457-7362.
6. **Spread the plastic tarp outdoors** where contaminated materials can be safely sorted for cleaning or disposal and take pictures to document their condition.
7. **Remove oil-contaminated items and place on tarps.** Some oily items can be difficult to

clean. Generally, nonporous materials like glass and metal can be cleaned with soap and degreasers. Avoid using products that are flammable, odorous or hazardous. Porous items made of wood, cardboard or fabric, and drywall and insulation are hard to clean and usually need to be discarded.

8. **Remove unsalvageable building components and contents** (e.g., carpets, drywall, and furniture) and other items for proper disposal. NYSDEC and local authorities will provide advice about proper disposal of oil contaminated material or household hazardous wastes.
9. **Oil spills often cause strong odors and can contaminate indoor air. Contaminated air should be directed out of the residence using fans.** Place one fan in a window or doorway, so it blows fresher, outdoor air into the living space. Have a second fan blowing air out of the contaminated area to the outdoors. Fans will be more effective if other nearby windows and doors are closed. You want to ensure that you are channeling the flow of air to exhaust the odors outdoors, not moving them around inside your home. If you do not have fans, opening more windows and doors will help to lessen the oil vapors and odors. Do not stay in a building with strong oil odors. Call NYSDOH Bureau of Toxic Substance Assessment at (518) 402-7800 for more information or assistance.
10. **Oil spills can also enter water wells. If your well water has an oily odor, do not drink from it.** Notify the NYSDEC Spill Hotline at (800) 457-7362 or NYSDOH Bureau of Toxic Substance Assessment (518) 402-7800.
11. **Thoroughly bathe yourself and launder clothing when cleanup is complete.**

Other Related Publications

Flood Cleanup and Home Repair
Carbon Monoxide: Know the Hazards
Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer
Drinking Water and Food Guidance After a Flood
Don't be Left in the Dark

Flooding Quick Reference Guide
Checklist and Resources for Repairing Your Flooded Home
How to Avoid Getting Sick and Injured After a Flood
How to Use an N95 Mask
Mold and Your Home: What You Need to Know
Restoring and Testing Your Private Well After a Flood



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