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# Oil Heat Maintenance

*A consumer tip sheet*



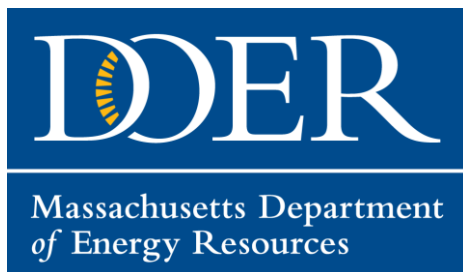
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## ***1. What kind of maintenance does my oil burner require?***

The terms of service contracts vary. Generally, full-service contracts entitle you to an annual maintenance visit, emergency service, and free replacement of certain parts. Some dealers may offer coverage for tank replacement and other related services.

Your oil burner should have an annual tune-up and cleaning. If this is not included in your contract it will cost approximately \$120-150. A tune-up and cleaning reduces the risk of heating system failure. It can also give you an early warning if your system needs replacement, which gives you time to shop for a new system before the winter season.

## ***2. When should I do my annual service call?***

The best time to do your tune-up and cleaning is before the heating season begins. Scheduling a tune-up and cleaning before winter saves time and money. It takes less time to do it before rather than during the winter heating season. Also, you will likely have more difficulty scheduling a tune-up and cleaning, as dealers are very busy during the winter months.

## ***3. When should I fill my oil tank?***

If you are on automatic delivery, your tank will be automatically filled at pre-scheduled intervals. If you are on a will call delivery basis, it is up to you to determine when you need oil and to call your dealer for delivery. Some suggest filling up before the heating season begins so that you're not without fuel when cold weather hits.

#### **4. *How often should my oil tank be filled?***

Dealers advise customers to check their oil tanks. They recommend not going below a 1/4 of a tank. Running low on oil can cause sediment that builds up in the bottom of your tank to be pumped into the fuel line and burner and cause clogging of filters and equipment. This can result in you requiring a service call, which costs you extra money.

#### **5. *Are there things that I can do to reduce the amount of energy I use?***

- You can save approximately 10% on your heating bills by turning the thermostat down 10 degrees for 8 hours a day. Many people turn down their thermostats at night or while they're at work.
- Move furniture and draperies away from radiators so heat can circulate more thoroughly through the house.
- If you have large freestanding radiators, you may install radiator reflectors between the radiator and the wall. The reflectors can improve the delivery of radiant heat.
- Vacuum air registers on a regular basis if you have a hot air heating system. Make sure carpets and furniture are not blocking the registers. During the heating season you should also check the air filter on the system every other week and clean or replace them if necessary.
- If you are away from your home for an extended time, do not turn off your heating system. This can lead to frozen pipes, resulting in costly repairs to your system. If possible, lower the thermostat

to 55 degrees at night and when you are away.

#### **6. *Compliance with the Homeowner Oil Heating System Upgrade and Insurance Law***

This law addresses oil leaks from home heating systems and has two major provisions that require:

- the installation of either an oil safety valve or an oil supply line with protective sleeve on systems that do not currently have these devices; and
- insurance companies that write homeowner policies to offer coverage for leaks from heating systems that use oil.

Most homeowner policies do not currently include such coverage, leaving many to pay for costly cleanups out of their own pocket. Although it is mandatory that insurance companies offer this coverage, the insurance is an optional purchase for homeowners.

For exemptions and more information, please visit the MA Department of Environmental Protection at [www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep).

Sources:  
CONEG Meeting in Manchester, NH 8/18/00  
DOER Winter Fuels Briefing  
Massachusetts Oil Heat Council  
Boston Oil Consumers Alliance  
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.