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## Rise in Heating Oil Thefts in the Area

Heating Oil Tanks have the potential to store thousands of pounds worth of heating oil and are often located in remote areas — this can make them an attractive target for thieves. The chance of being targeted by thieves is relatively low but becoming a victim of heating oil theft is a costly, inconvenient and upsetting experience.

In order to steal heating oil, thieves will usually decant, syphon or pump oil from your tank into other containers. Thieves might use this oil themselves or sell it on. There have even been reports of criminals selling stolen oil back to the victim.

Opportunistic thieves might target tanks that they spot while out and about, whereas more organised criminals use tools such as Google Maps to identify homes with oil tanks in their gardens. Another tactic used by would-be thieves is following oil delivery vehicles in order to identify homes with full tanks.

Data from police forces across England suggests heating oil theft is most prevalent in the first three months of the year when tanks are likely to be full and the days are short. Also, the price of heating oil fluctuates, and when the cost of oil is high, heating oil becomes a more attractive asset for thieves to try and steal. However, thefts occur year-round, so it pays to be vigilant at all times.

### Ways to Avoid Heating Oil Theft

Firstly, place your tank as far away from the road as possible. You don't want opportunistic thieves to spot your tank while driving by, nor do you want to facilitate a quick getaway.

Secondly, if your tank is exposed, it's a good idea to conceal it with a fence, wall, plants or trellis. Just make sure to leave enough room for servicing, maintenance, and oil deliveries.

Thirdly, if possible, install a roof over your tank. This will prevent thieves from spotting it on satellite images and targeting your home.

Fourthly, consider placing a gravel path up to and around your tank. This is a relatively easy and cost-effective tip. The gravel will create a noisy route that could spook trespassers — or even alert you to their presence.

And lastly, locate your tank in a position that is visible from inside your home. The potential of being spotted and caught is a huge deterrent for thieves. If your tank is visible from inside your home, you could also consider additional security measures, so thieves think you're at home even when you're not. For example, you could use lightbulbs on a timer or leave the radio on when you go out.

If your tank is already installed, think about tank cages, good lighting, and CCTV cameras. Installing a simple good quality lock would deter most thieves as it would make a lot of noise and time to remove it. A really good and inexpensive option is using camouflage, foliage and netting could be used for this, and would hide the tank from the road and from Google Earth.