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Toronto (416)964-9415
Burlington (905)333-4663
Cambridge (519)740-0600
Other areas 1(800)268-7070



HEATING

Good News

The Good News is that most houses don't have these problems . . .

Bad News

UNDERGROUND OIL TANKS

While environmental issues are typically beyond the scope of a standard home inspection, the issue of buried oil tanks has come to the forefront in recent months. According to the Fuels Safety Branch of the Technical Standards Division of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, abandoned underground fuel tanks must be removed. The Fuel Oil Code states that an underground oil tank which has not been used for two years must have the product removed from the tank and the tank removed from the ground. The soil around the tank must then be tested for contamination. Any contaminated soil must be removed and the cavity filled to grade level with clean fill. All work must be done by a contractor who is registered under the Energy Act.

In straight forward cases, soil testing and tank removal will likely cost in the

vicinity of \$2,000. If any contaminated soil is discovered, costs can skyrocket. Sometimes, the contaminated soil extends below the footings of the house and removal of the soil requires re-supporting of the structure.

During a recent home inspection, we discovered an abandoned buried oil tank in a crawl space below an addition. The tank was likely buried outdoors until the addition was built over it. In cases such as this, one can apply for a variance. If a variance is granted, the tank can be pumped out and filled with a concrete slurry (to prevent the tank from ultimately collapsing). This, of course, can only be done if the tank has not leaked and contaminated the soil.

Buried residential oil tanks are not all that common in Southern Ontario, however, if you discover oil fill lines and you can't find the tank or the location where the tank was removed

from the basement, you may have just stumbled across a buried one.

In some neighbourhoods, oil was once supplied to houses from a central storage tank via underground piping. In these cases the tank is not on the property and consequently it is of no concern.

HIGH TEMPERATURE PLASTIC VENTING

It is common for high efficiency furnaces to use plastic venting to exhaust products of combustion from the furnace to the outdoors. Plastic venting has worked well because the temperature of the exhaust gases from high efficiency furnaces is relatively low.

Mid-efficiency furnaces and boilers have hotter exhaust gases. They use special high temperature plastic vent pipes.

On June 7, 1994 the Fuels Safety Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations prohibited the sale or installation of three high temperature plastic vent pipes. These are Plexvent manufactured by Plexco, Ultravent manufactured by Hart and Cooley and Sel-Vent manufactured by Selkirk. While the Fuel Safety Branch prohibited the future sale and installation of these materials they made no requirement to remove existing installations.

The Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations has however, issued a Consumer Alert advising consumers to have their vents checked by the installing contractor or another qualified heating contractor to determine whether any of the joints

have separated or the venting material has cracked.

Plexvent is a black pipe with clear amber fittings with the words "Plexco Plexvent" printed on the pipe in red letters. Ultravent is a grey pipe with "Hart & Cooley Ultravent" printed in white. And Sel-Vent is black pipe with the word "Sel-Vent" printed on the pipe.

FLEX-HEAT CEILING HEATING SYSTEMS

Ontario Hydro is warning homeowners that Flex-Heat electric radiant ceiling heating is dangerous and that if your house has such a system you must disconnect it immediately. Ontario Hydro says the system can fail without warning and may become a fire hazard.

Most houses with Flex-Heat have a label on the electrical panel box or a label on the thermostat indicating that it is a Flex-Heat system.

Some houses with Flex-Heat do not have labels. These houses can be identified as having radiant heat by the fact that the rooms are heated but have no duct work, no radiators and no electric baseboard heaters. Most houses with radiant heat have individual room or zone thermostats.

If the house has electric radiant heat and no stickers indicating that it is Flex-Heat, the attic should be inspected (under the insulation) to determine whether black plastic panels have been installed immediately above the ceiling.

Flex-Heat was only installed after 1975.

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THE CARSON DUNLOP DIFFERENCE

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