

## 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 prickly hedge. The smallest trace of blood or shred of ripped clothing could help the police identify the offender. West Mercia Police has produced a 'Nip Garden Crime in the Bud' leaflet which gives more



information about defensive planting and a list of shrubs suitable for this purpose. These shrubs can, if planted around your tank, provide an effective and decorative thief proof barrier. To obtain a copy, contact your local crime risk manager or download it from the Advice Centre on the force website.

## Securing your oil tank

Following on from the defensive planting tactic, fences and walls can also make life difficult for thieves. A wooden or metal fence, wall or trellis can give significant protection to the tank but remember that the oil tanker driver needs access to fill the tank! The wall or fence should be as close to the tank and as high as possible. A metal grill or cage with a lockable access point across the top of this wall or fence can further improve security. Don't forget, a trellis can be decorated with defensive planting. Oil tank security products, such as metal enclosures, could also be used to increase security. They often cost less than one tank full of oil and will last for many years.

## Closed circuit television

The use of CCTV as a crime prevention and a crime detection tool has grown massively in recent years. It could play a part in the protection of oil tanks but before you spend lots of money on equipment make an assessment of your needs.

Ask yourself:

- 1 What do I hope to achieve by using CCTV?
- 2 How much am I prepared to spend?
- 3 Is there a reasonable level of light where the cameras will be operating or do I need to think about using cameras with low light capability? (Most thefts take place at night).
- 4 What am I going to record the captured images on? Digital recording is best.
- 5 How am I going to provide the police with any evidence I may capture?



For more information on heating and diesel oil security, contact one of the force's crime risk managers. Alternatively, visit the Advice Centre on the force website where you can also find crime prevention advice for your home and garden.

0300 333 3000

[www.westmercia.police.uk](http://www.westmercia.police.uk)



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**Heating & Diesel  
Oil Security**

# Heating & Diesel Oil Theft

Theft of heating and diesel oil has been a problem for many years and this crime often increases whenever the price of crude oil rises. A rise in the price of fuel at the petrol pump inevitably leads to a rise in the cost of heating oil. This makes oil a more attractive proposition for thieves and they are now actively targeting fuel tanks at farms, transport depots and domestic properties. The thief may be using the oil for their own central heating or selling it on at a handsome profit.

These tanks can contain thousands of pounds worth of oil and it therefore makes good sense to take a few precautions to protect them. The purpose of this leaflet is to give you a few ideas about what can be done to make life more difficult for thieves.



OFTEC (the Oil Firing Technical Association for the petroleum industry) offers advice and guidance for those who use and store oil at their premises. There are certain rules and regulations that may apply to you and OFTEC will help clarify these for you.

They can be reached at [www.oftec.org](http://www.oftec.org) or by calling **0845 6585 080**. They also produce an 'easy guide to domestic oil storage' which is a very straightforward and useful document.

## Siting your oil tank

The position of the tank can have a significant effect on how hard a target it is in the eyes of the thief. If the tank is close to the house, with one or more windows capable of giving a view of it, then the thief may consider the chances of being seen too high. If the tank is close to a road, path, drive or alleyway then it will be a far easier target. Hiding the tank behind the garage, shed or some other type of outbuilding is fairly commonplace, but it does give the thief the advantage.

Not many oil tanks are works of art so who wants a tank in full view? While it may not be desirable, or legal, to have the tank close to the house some sort of compromise location would be sensible. Of course this will not only be a major consideration when a new tank is to be installed but may be necessary if the tank has been targeted before. They do need to be within a reasonable distance of the road otherwise the oil supply company may not be able to refill it for you.



## Control switches

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

## Padlocks

A thief will usually come equipped with a limited range of tools to attack your tank so it's worth spending a little more on good quality locks. Close shackle padlocks are the best as they offer most resistance to the most popular of burglar tools: the bolt cropper! It is advisable to use a padlock on a surrounding cage or fence, rather than on the tank itself. There have been occasions where tanks have been drilled by thieves, so a cage or fence provides an extra level of defence (see the 'Securing your oil tank' section for more details).

## Oil level gauges

Remote electronic oil level gauges are now available which will set off an audible alarm if the oil level in the tank suddenly drops or falls below a quarter full. These gauges can be located in the kitchen, or perhaps a utility room to warn of any potential problem.



## Security lights

Security lights can have a very positive effect and make any property a much harder target for thieves. It's not always necessary to floodlight the area with high power beams, as a more subtle level of lighting may be all that is needed. Low energy 'dusk 'til dawn' lights positioned close to the tank should, in most cases, provide sufficient light to illuminate any suspicious activity. This type of light can be both effective and inexpensive. High powered lights can be used but care should be taken not to cause any nuisance to neighbours or road users.