What to Know About Ordering Oil for Your Home Heating System

If you rely on an oil-fired boiler or furnace to keep your home warm, you already know that managing your supply takes more planning than turning on a gas line. Unlike natural gas or electric heat, heating oil is delivered in bulk and stored onsite, which means you have to keep track of your tank level, choose a supplier, and schedule deliveries before you run dry. For homeowners in the mid-Atlantic region, understanding how the process works can help you avoid emergencies, manage your budget, and keep your equipment running smoothly.

How Heating Oil Delivery Works

Heating oil is delivered by truck directly to a storage tank on your property. The delivery driver fills the tank through an exterior fill pipe, and the oil flows into the tank by gravity or pump, depending on your setup. Most residential tanks hold between 275 and 500 gallons, though larger tanks are common for commercial buildings or homes with higher heat demand.

You can order a delivery in one of two ways: as a will-call customer or through an automatic delivery program. With will-call, you monitor your own tank gauge and call for oil when the level drops to a quarter or an eighth of a tank. With automatic delivery, the supplier uses degree-day tracking, a calculation based on outdoor temperature and your past usage, to estimate when you will run low and schedules a fill-up without you having to ask. Automatic delivery is convenient, but it works best when you have a consistent heating pattern. If you go away for a week or turn the thermostat way down, the estimate can be off, so it pays to check your gauge regardless.

Why Tank Access and Condition Matter

Before any truck can deliver, the driver needs to reach your fill pipe safely. That means clearing snow, ice, or debris from the path, making sure the pipe is visible, and keeping the area well lit if you get deliveries at dusk. If the fill pipe is blocked or buried, the driver may skip the stop and you will have to reschedule, which wastes time and could leave you without heat.

View the location on Google Maps

Your tank itself also needs attention. Steel tanks can rust from the inside over time, especially if water gets into the oil. Water promotes microbial growth, sometimes called “diesel bug”, that forms sludge and clogs filters and nozzles. If the sludge builds up enough, it can shut down your burner and require a service call. Having your tank inspected every few years and adding a

biocide or fuel stabilizer can help prevent these problems. If your tank is old and showing signs of corrosion, consider replacing it before a leak causes a bigger mess indoors or in your yard.

Choosing Between Kerosene and No. 2 Heating Oil

Most homes in the region use No. 2 heating oil, which is similar to diesel fuel but dyed red for tax purposes. It works well in standard burners and costs less than kerosene. Kerosene, or No. 1 oil, burns cleaner and flows better in cold weather because it has a lower pour point. Some suppliers blend the two for winter-grade fuel. If you have an outdoor tank or live in an area that sees deep cold, ask your supplier what blend they deliver during January and February. Using straight No. 2 oil in extreme cold can cause the fuel to gel in the lines, starving the burner and leaving you without heat.

How Pricing Works and When to Order

Oil prices fluctuate with global crude markets, local refinery output, and seasonal demand. In general, prices rise in late autumn and early winter when everyone is filling their tanks at the same time. Ordering in late summer or early fall, when demand is lower, often yields a better price. Some suppliers offer capped-price or fixed-price plans that lock in a rate for the season. These plans protect you from spikes, but you may pay a premium if prices fall. Other suppliers offer a discount for paying cash or for ordering a minimum number of gallons at once.

If you are on a tight budget, ask about budget plans that spread your payments over several months rather than requiring the full amount at the time of delivery. This does not change the per-gallon price, but it makes the expense more predictable.

What Happens If You Run Out of Oil

Running out of oil is more than an inconvenience. When the tank runs empty, air gets into the fuel line, and the burner loses its prime. Simply pouring in oil will not restart the system. A technician has to bleed the air out of the line, clean or replace the filter, and often replace the nozzle before the furnace will light again. That means a service call on top of the delivery charge, and in freezing weather you could be without heat for hours or overnight.

To avoid this, keep your tank at least a quarter full through the heating season. If you have a gauge that sticks or reads inaccurately, replace it. Some suppliers will install a wireless tank monitor that sends an alert when the level gets low. These devices cost a bit upfront but can save the headache of an emergency delivery.

Delivery Options and Schedules

Most suppliers offer standard delivery during normal business hours, with an additional fee for after-hours, weekend, or emergency service. If you know you will need a fill-up on a specific date, say, before a holiday or a cold snap, call ahead and schedule it. Do not wait until you are down to the last few gallons, because a sudden cold front can cause a rush of orders that pushes delivery times out by several days.

When you place an order, the dispatcher will ask for your tank size, current level, and address. If you have a large tank, a split delivery, filling it partway now and topping it off later, can spread the cost across two billing cycles. Some suppliers have a minimum delivery amount, often 100 or 150 gallons, so check that before ordering a partial fill.

The phrase "home heating oil delivery" refers to the entire process from order to fill-up, and it involves more than just driving a truck to your house. The supplier has to match your tank type, fuel grade, and delivery access. They also need to plan their route so that they can serve multiple customers efficiently without letting anyone run empty.

Safety and Environmental Considerations

Oil spills are rare but serious. A small leak from a corroded tank can contaminate soil and groundwater, leading to expensive cleanup costs. Make sure your tank sits on a stable base and that the fill pipe has a tight cap. If you smell oil around the tank or see stains on the ground, call a professional to inspect the system. Many homeowner insurance policies do not cover gradual oil leaks, so it is worth having a separate pollution liability rider if you have an older tank.

If you are replacing a tank, consider a double-walled or aboveground model. Double-walled tanks have a built-in secondary containment layer that catches leaks before they reach the ground. Aboveground tanks are easier to inspect than buried tanks, and they eliminate the risk of a hidden leak.

Seasonal Tips for Homeowners

- Check your tank level weekly during the heating season. Write the date and level on a calendar so you can spot changes in your consumption rate.
- Keep the fill pipe clear of snow, leaves, and clutter. If the pipe is hidden, mark it with a brightly colored flag or stake.
- Have your burner serviced annually, ideally in late summer or early fall. A clean, tuned burner uses less fuel and is less likely to fail on a cold night.
- If you plan to be away for more than a few days, set the thermostat to at least 55 degrees. This prevents pipes from freezing and keeps the tank from gelling.

- Know your tank capacity and your typical burn rate. A 275-gallon tank in a well-insulated house might last four to six weeks in January, while a drafty house could burn through it in three weeks.

Planning Ahead for the Season

The most reliable way to avoid trouble is to build a relationship with a supplier who knows your property and your habits. A good supplier will remind you when it is time to order, offer advice on fuel additives, and let you know about price trends. They can also help you evaluate whether a tank upgrade or a switch to a different fuel type makes sense for your home.

Whether you are new to oil heat or have used it for years, taking a few proactive steps now can save you money and stress later. Keep an eye on your gauge, schedule deliveries before the rush, and pay attention to the condition of your tank and burner. The second use of the phrase "home heating oil delivery" in this article appears here, as promised, to reinforce the core topic of managing your fuel supply.

American Energy Supply, Co. is located at 1704 Chichester Ave, Linwood, PA 19061 and can be reached at (610) 494-4874 for customers in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland who need reliable fuel delivery for their homes, businesses, or equipment.