

Buried Fuel Tank Suspected Source of Fuel Spill

Monday, 21 October 2013

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White absorbent booms were placed across a small stream by Bayside Fire Dept. to prevent leaked stove oil from spreading. Jay Barrett/KMXT photo

Jay Barrett/KMXT

An underground residential fuel tank is the suspected culprit in a fuel oil spill in Woodland Acres. Bayside Fire Chief Bob Himes said he received a report of a strong smell of diesel early Thursday morning and later tracked it to a home on Teal Way. He said the property owner, who is currently out of town, has been contacted and is having the tank checked out.

Himes said the property owner had noticed an increase in his fuel bill, and thought someone was stealing his oil. Himes says the tank is probably 300- to 500- gallons in size, but he's not sure how long it might have been leaking, or how much may have escaped.

"The property owner is responsible for all the clean up and mitigation. They'll have to remove the tank and take care of the contaminated soil and do the clean up collected in the creek and the absorbent booms. That is all being over seen by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. They're the primary agency on this. We were just the first response, investigate, and turn it over to them."

Himes said Friday that the spill was not a very significant amount, and while annoying, there's no danger of fire or explosion from the spilled fuel.

"Especially when it's outside like this it's not very hazardous at all. Ingestion is the worst thing you could probably see. But there's not enough to be real concerned about that other than for small animals. So I don't expect it to do much damage. Be a little inconvenience and irritation to some people who smell it. Last couple days we've had the heavy fog that kept the smell down in lower lying areas, so more people probably smelled it."

Nevertheless, he suggests folks keep their kids and pets away from the ditch.

"Just keep them away from that creek. It's fairly noticeable in that area. Most of the neighbors know and been contacted. Keep the animals and pets and kids away from they basically don't track it back into your house. That'd be the biggest problem right now tracking it back on your nice clean carpets."

Underground fuel tanks, once common, are less so today for this very reason:

"Underground fuel tanks are problematic. The soil around here is not real conducive to storing metal tanks underground, because things like this happening. They have a hole in them or whatever and they leak and it's not detected right away until it gets into groundwater system like this one and surfaces."

Himes added that he didn't think any of the spilled fuel will trickle down to anadromous streams or into the ocean.

