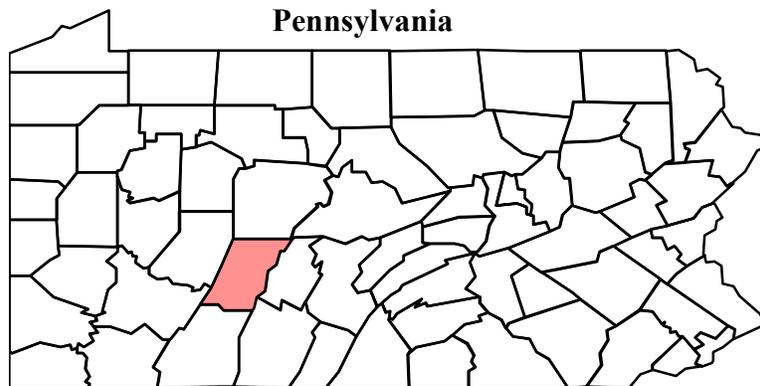


## CAMBRIA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES HOME HEATING OIL SPILL PREVENTION



### Overview

The Cambria County Department of Emergency Services Heating Oil Plan is a coordinated effort between county government officials and industry representatives to minimize the dangers associated with heating oil tanks. Their combined efforts culminated in the creation of a *Heating Oil Plan* and informational brochure, which helped reduce heating oil tank accidents by 50% in the first year. The plan focuses on cooperation and coordination between all parties at the local level. Some successful features of the plan are:

- Focus is on pollution prevention;
- The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), local government officials, and industry members work together on outreach to the public;
- Training for hazardous material (HAZMAT) teams on leaking tank response; and
- Educational home inspection process.

### Background

Located in west central Pennsylvania, Cambria covers roughly 629 square miles of mountainous, rural, urban, and suburban areas. Its primary industries are service oriented establishments, steel processing, and three co-generation power plants. A large percentage of the population in Cambria County relies on oil to heat homes during the winter. This means a risk of oil spills from damaged or improperly stored tanks. The Cambria County Department of Emergency Services has taken a proactive approach to the prevention of oil spills and fires from home heating oil tanks.



#### Planning Committee Profile

Cambria County Department of Emergency Services works in conjunction with the following organizations:

- Cambria County HAZMAT Team
- Agway Energy Products
- Ashbridge Oil Company
- Barber Oil Company
- Hoover Gas and Oil
- Jacobs Oil Company
- Thorton Oil Company

**Coordinated Outreach Activity.** The Cambria County Department of Emergency Services is active in providing numerous community outreach programs, including public education on safe heating

oil storage. This includes videos and brochures explaining ways to prevent damage to heating oil tanks. The brochure (described below) has fostered cooperation with oil distributors in the area, making it easier for the industry and Emergency Services to collaborate on prevention strategies. The oil companies are responsible for distributing the brochures to residents. The goal of this program is to educate the public on maintaining proper and safe heating oil tanks, thus reducing the number and severity of oil spills. The program is so effective that it has been highlighted in the local newspaper and broadcast news.

The plan highlights a home inspection process for existing tanks and fittings. It provides recommendations for new tank installation, and covers the procedures for disposing of damaged or unneeded storage tanks. Emphasis is given to explaining to the heating oil consumer the environmental impacts and associated response and clean-up costs that result from a heating oil spill.

Because the plan is strictly preventative, there is no specific incident illustrating the effectiveness of the Cambria County Emergency Services Heating Oil Plan. The plan's success is measured by the statistical comparison of home heating oil incidents occurring before and after the plan was introduced. In its initial winter, there was a 50% decline in heating oil accidents, compared to the previous three winters.

Prior to receiving a State grant to create the heating oil program, the Emergency Services Department conducted a commodity flow survey to verify the existing problem. The survey indicated the need for a prevention plan, and the "Safe Heating Oil Storage" brochures were created with the grant money. With the tremendous initial success of the program, it quickly gained momentum. Six corporations now participate fully in the plan when only three were slated to participate, and over 12,000 "Safe Heating Oil Storage" brochures have been distributed, a dramatic increase over the original estimate of 5,000.

Although the program has limited funding, it has the full cooperation of HAZMAT response teams, industry, and the local emergency management organizations. In an attempt to expand the program, the Emergency Services Department is distributing brochures through mass mailings, and using a promotional video to highlight the industry participation in the plan.

**Point of Contact**



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