



Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc

Box 2004, Suite 2200, 20 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M4R 1K8 Telephone (416) 484-4555 Facsimile (416) 484-6352

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

-14 July, 2008

CHURCHES IN ATLANTIC CANADA TARGETED FOR THEIR FUEL OIL

DATELINE ATLANTIC CANADA - Over the past few months, two churches in Atlantic Canada had significant amounts of oil stolen from their exterior oil tanks. Jim Morton, a Halifax-based Risk Control Specialist with Ecclesiastical Insurance, expressed his concern about the impact this type of theft will have on faith communities, as well as concern about the possibility of similar incidents occurring across Canada.

In addition to losing costly oil, the targeted churches were left with damaged tanks and oil spills, resulting in significant clean-up expense. Thieves are accessing tank contents via unlocked filler pipes, and by cutting copper oil lines, not only for the value of the copper, but as a means of siphoning oil from the tanks.

The average price of oil in Canada on July 8, 2008 was \$1.37 per litre, and costs are predicted to climb even higher. Ecclesiastical Insurance predicts that thefts and attempted oil thefts will increase accordingly and has developed important protocols and preventative measures that may help deter thieves.

- **Locks** - Tanks with exposed filler pipes should have padlocks fitted to the filler pipe cover to deter siphoning or pumping of oil from the tank. Oil supply companies can supply padlocks (and keys for their drivers) at a reasonable cost.
- **Valve Protectors** – Protect exposed fittings and valves by covering them with valve protectors. Hard bolt the valve protectors safely to the tank to make it difficult for thieves to lift them. Valve protection alone might not deter determined thieves, but it increases protection when used with other preventative measures.
- **Oil Safety Valve/Anti-Siphon Valve** - These valves are designed to automatically shut off the flow of oil from a tank in the event that the line between the valve and the oil burner becomes broken or severed. This device prevents fuel from being siphoned out of the tank. Posting a notice that these valves are present could deter attempts of theft.
- **Oil Lines** – New oil lines are coated with a polyethylene sheathing (coating) and are recommended for all oil line replacements. Consideration should be given to placing the line in strong metal tubing resistant to hack sawing or

cutting.

- **Fencing/Enclosure** – Fences, or framed enclosures with a locked door or gate protect oil tanks from malicious damage and oil theft. Fences should be constructed of a suitable wire mesh or heavy timber fabric that covers the entire perimeter of the tank and, if possible, the top. Ensure the fencing or containment area is large enough to allow full inspection of the top, ends, sides, and bottom of the tank. Valve protectors and locks are still required for added protection.
- **Lighting/Church Watch Program** – Well-lit areas are less inviting to thieves, and equally true for areas near exterior oil tanks. A Church Watch plan with volunteers regularly driving, running, walking, cycling etc. past and through the church grounds is a way to keep watch on oil tanks and the property in general.

Interior Tanks are recommended over exterior tank installation, specifically double-walled tanks with 2 layers of protection. These installations provide much better protection against oil theft and vandalism if they are inside a locked area within a building. Interior tanks are also not subjected to the same external elements: extremes in temperatures, ice, snow, external corrosion, and condensation.

About Ecclesiastical Insurance

Ecclesiastical Insurance is the insurer of choice for Canada's places of worship. Established in the United Kingdom in 1887, Ecclesiastical has been present in Canada since 1972. Owned by a charitable trust, the company is committed to serving the needs of its customers and the larger community. Apart from funds required for business operations, group profits are redistributed for the benefit of faith and charitable initiatives. Ecclesiastical is rated "A" by A.M. Best, and "A-" by Standard and Poor's.

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For more information about loss prevention and Ecclesiastical Insurance, please contact:

Stuart Rowley
Underwriting and Operations Manager for Canada
(416) 484-4918
srowley@eccles-ins.com

Jacinta Whyte
General Manager & Chief Agent for Canada
(416) 484-4900

swhyte@eccles-ins.com