

Cleaning Tank Vent Whistles in Place

Tank vent whistles sometimes become badly fouled and require cleaning. Removing these for cleaning or replacement can be expensive and time-consuming, especially on underground tanks.

The fouling that builds up on vent whistles is probably similar in many respects to tank sludge. We suggest the following approach:

1. Pour an 8-ounce bottle of Fuel Right® EP down the vent pipe. This will soften and partially break down the fouling material. Wait at least a day or two and then...
2. Pour half a gallon of mineral spirits (paint thinner) down the vent line. This should wash away the softened deposit and leave a clean whistle.

In case it is not obvious, let us point out that these things should not be poured into the vent line just before filling the tank. If they were, you would have an unwanted eruption out of the vent. Perhaps the driver could be instructed to do the Fuel Right part *just after* he fills the tank. A technician could then follow in a couple of days and do the mineral spirits part. By starting the process at a fill, that would also ensure that another fill would not happen soon thereafter while the liquids were still in the vent line.

We suggest mineral spirits because this solvent has a flash point of around 110° F – well above normal ambient temperatures. Others have suggested kerosene for the same purpose, but kerosene is not a particularly good solvent for “grease-like” deposits. We can think of no reason why putting half a gallon of mineral spirits in a fuel oil tank would cause problems, as it is already found in many fuel oil additives (*not* Fuel Right). If you have a better plan we would like to hear it.

Incidentally, our plan has an added benefit. The Fuel Right that is ultimately washed into the tank will provide additional tank protection – never a bad idea in badly fouled systems.