
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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WMD-OIL-2

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Household Disposal of Used Oil

Approximately 3 million gallons of used oil are generated in New Hampshire each year. As much as 50% of this amount may be generated by Do-It-Yourself (DIY) oil changers. Used oil is the result of normal use in motor vehicles and motorized equipment. After use, used motor oil may contain a number of contaminants, including metals and organic chemicals. Proper management of used oil is important to help prevent contamination of surface water and groundwater.

It takes only one pint of oil to produce a one-acre slick on surface water, which may kill plants, fish and other wildlife. One quart of oil may contaminate 250,000 gallons of groundwater and make it unsafe to drink. DIY used motor oil should not be disposed of in the trash or on the ground where it may eventually contaminate drinking water supplies. It should not be spread on roads or driveways or poured down storm sewers where it may be carried to lakes and streams.

The Goal

The goal is for DIY used motor oil to be recycled or reused. One gallon of used oil can be rerefined into 2.5 quarts of recycled lubricating oil, whereas it takes 42 gallons of crude oil to produce this same amount of virgin lubricant. When meeting the proper specifications, used oil can also be efficiently used as fuel in approved boilers or furnaces.

The Solution

After performing an oil change, you should carefully pour the used oil into a suitable recycling container. You may purchase specially designed containers at an automotive store, or you may reuse a sturdy, clean, preferably clear, container with a closeable lid. Do not use containers that previously contained household chemicals such as bleach. Plastic milk jugs with screw caps work well.

Label the container "Used Oil." Do not mix any other wastes – such as paint thinners, gasoline or antifreeze – with the used oil. This will affect the recyclability of the oil and may present a safety hazard.

Filled containers should be carefully transported to a collection center for proper recycling. To obtain the location of the collection center nearest you, contact your municipality or call NHDES toll-free at 1-888-TAKEOIL (825-3645).

Since July 1989, communities have had the authority to assess an additional fee on motor vehicle registration for the purpose of collecting and disposing of motor vehicle waste such as used motor oil, tires and batteries (see fact sheet SW-23). Additionally, political subdivisions and other government entities, motor vehicle inspection stations, and non-profit organizations that focus on waste management and recycling issues are eligible to receive grant monies to establish used oil collection centers to collect do-it-yourself used oil and filters. Many New Hampshire municipalities have taken advantage of grants to purchase such items as storage tanks, filter crushers, drums, spill kits, containment units and sheds.

DIY used motor oil poses a significant threat to our environment if not properly handled. Proper management involves collection for energy recovery and recycling.

For More Information

For more information on the management of used oil, filters, or funding opportunities for used oil and filter collection centers, please contact the NHDES Used Oil Program at (603) 271-6424 or toll-free 1-888-TAKEOIL, or DES Waste Management Division, HWMB - Used Oil Program, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; www.des.nh.gov.