Handling Waste Oil
A Quick Guide for Auto Repair Shops
Taking the precautions listed below will help you avoid waste oil accidents, limit your legal liability, and protect both your workers and the environment.

**Storing Waste Oil**

- Store waste oil in sturdy, leakproof metal containers or in a tank approved by your local fire department.
- Label the container, tank, and fillpipe for underground tanks in large letters: “Used Oil.”
- Keep containers closed unless you are adding or removing waste oil.
- Place containers on a surface made from any nonporous material, such as concrete, that waste oil cannot pass through. The surface should have no cracks or gaps.
- Store waste oil away from drains or ignition sources.

**Inspecting Storage Areas**

- Check containers and storage areas each week for spills or leaks from lids, seals, and seams.

**Preparing for a Spill**

- Keep cleanup and containment materials ready for immediate use.
- Write an emergency response plan, post the instructions in an easily visible spot in the shop, and train employees in the procedures.

**Recycling or Disposing Waste Oil**

- Contract with a licensed transporter to pick up your waste oil for recycling or disposal. (Call the Maine Department of Environmental Protection [ME DEP] at 207-287-2651 for further information including a list of transporters.)
- Burn the waste oil in an approved space heater in your garage (Contact a heater oil burner...
Managing Waste Oil Filters

Follow these steps when changing oil filters.

1. Remove the filter from the engine while warm and immediately drain free-flowing oil.
2. Put the drained oil in your waste oil drum or tank.
3. Puncture the filter dome. Place the filter on a rack to drain into a waste oil drum or tank for 12 hours.
4. Ship the used filters to a recycler or discard them as solid waste after 12 hours of draining.

Handling Shop Towels and Absorbents Containing Waste Oil

To avoid managing towels and absorbents as hazardous waste, they must contain only waste oil and the oil cannot be free-flowing or dripping.

- Send shop towels to a permitted industrial laundry.
- Handle large amounts of absorbents (spill cleanups) as “special waste.” (Contact the Solid Waste Division of the ME DEP at 207-287-2651 for further information.) Small amounts of absorbents may be disposed in the trash.

Good housekeeping reduces spills and protects you against liability. Here are several suggestions for limiting waste oil problems in your shop.

- Place drip pans under cars.
- Use different pans for waste oil and for parts covered with solvents.
- Fill drip pans only half-way and then use a funnel to pour the oil into a drum or tank.
- Use dry cleanup methods when you do have spills. You can use (1) reusable absorbent pads, (2) a bristle broom and brush, or (3) mops that absorb only oily liquids. Wring out or pour the waste oil you clean up into a container or tank. Clean any leftover waste oil with a rag. Discard the cleanup debris in a separate container from the used oil. As a last resort, use clay absorbents or sawdust, or alternatives such as corn cobs or peat.
- Build curbs around your waste oil storage area to contain 110% of the volume of the largest waste oil container or tank.
Improper Management of Waste Oil Is Against the Law

It is illegal to discard waste oil in a dumpster, down a sewer, in the water, or on the ground. In addition, any mixture of waste oil and solvents is considered a hazardous waste, which makes disposal costs extremely high.

Why Is Waste Oil a Concern?

Waste oil contains harmful contaminants such as benzene and lead, picked up during the operation of a vehicle. Safe management and disposal of waste oil protects not just drinking water, fish, and land, but also the workers in your shop.

Why Does It Make Good Business Sense to Reduce Waste Oil Spills?

Waste oil spills cost money and take time to clean up. Even minor spills can cause major contamination problems you are legally required to clean up any spills and you may also be subject to government fines.

If You Need Help

Keep these telephone numbers handy.

If you have an oil spill, call the nearest Maine Department of Environmental Protection (ME DEP) office.

Augusta 207-287-7800
Bangor 207-944-670
Portland 207-822-6300
Presque Isle 207-764-0477

(After 5:00 pm on weekdays and on weekends, call 800-482-0777)

If you have questions about state waste oil regulations, contact the ME DEP 207-287-2651

If you want free technical assistance for your shop, contact the ME DEP Small Business Assistance Program 800-789-9802

For any other questions, contact your local fire department, health department or sewer authority.

If you are not sure who to call, contact your city or town hall.