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# Handling Used Oil from Your Home

If you own a car, tractor, lawnmower, boat or recreational vehicle, you probably know that it's important to change the oil regularly to keep the motor running properly and extend its useful life. But did you know that it's just as important to dispose of the used oil safely? According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,



about 185 million gallons of used motor oil are improperly disposed by consumers in the United States each year. This represents over 40% of our nation's annual oil pollution.

## Improper Disposal Concerns

Improper disposal of used oil can cause harmful pollution of the soil, rivers, lakes and groundwater, as well as damage local water treatment plants. Dumping used oil onto the ground can contaminate underground water supplies and is nearly impossible to clean up. Used oil does not readily dissolve in water and is slow to degrade in the environment. One gallon of oil can produce an oil slick up to eight acres in size. Used oil from a single oil change can ruin one million gallons of water (a year's supply for 50 people) or make four acres of soil unusable for planting for decades.

## Recycling Used Oil

Although oil picks up metals and acids as it circulates through the engine block and crankcase of an internal

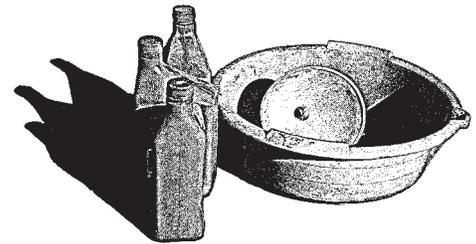
combustion motor, it does not lose its lubricating properties. These contaminants can be removed through the re-refining process. Recycling used oil for use as an industrial fuel or re-refining it as a lubricant conserves natural resources, saves energy, and is beneficial to the environment. It takes 42 gallons of crude oil to produce 2.5 quarts of lubricating oil, while one gallon of used oil will produce the same 2.5 quarts.

## Using Good Maintenance Practices

If you do your own vehicle or equipment maintenance, it's important to think about where and how you do this. Even small drips and spills can add up to a problem. Some tips for good vehicle maintenance:

- Avoid doing maintenance in an area that's close to a surface water or near a water well, if you have one.

- Do maintenance in a location where spills and drips from your vehicles and equipment can be contained.
- If possible, use drip pans to collect oil while you are doing maintenance work.



- Soak up small drips and spills with sawdust or kitty litter. Properly dispose of absorbent materials along with your trash.

- **DO NOT** dump your used oil directly on the ground.
- **DO NOT** dump your used oil down a street or storm drain. Most storm drains lead directly to a waterway.
- **DO NOT** burn used oil in a burn barrel.
- **DO NOT** burn used oil from vehicles in an oil-fired space heater at your home. Burning used oil in a heater that it is not designed for can cause problems with the equipment and create a fire hazard.
- **DO NOT** use used oil to kill weeds on your property or to control dust on drives or roadways.

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## Proper Handling of Used Oil

After changing the oil in your vehicles or equipment:

1. Pour the used oil into a clean plastic reusable container and seal it shut. **Never** mix used motor oil with other materials such as gasoline, fuel oil, paint products, antifreeze, brake fluid, pesticides or other household chemicals. Once motor oil is contaminated with these products, it is nearly impossible to recycle.
2. Remove the oil filter, turn it upside down and drain it at a 45 degree angle into the oil catch pan overnight. Seal the filter in a plastic zipper bag, coffee can with lid, or other leak-proof container. Contact your local service stations or scrap dealers for recycling outlets. If you've completely drained the filter and can't find someone to take it for recycling, you can dispose of it along with your regular trash. Make sure it's been well drained first.
3. Take the container of used oil to a used motor oil collection center. Many service stations and other outlets that sell new motor oil allow consumers to deposit used oil in their collection tanks. Others have

set up drop-off sites where residents may take small amounts of used oil and deposit it into special containers for recycling.



For more information about local opportunities, contact your local solid waste management district (listed under county government in the blue pages of the phone book or at [www.epa.state.oh.us/dsiwm/document/swmdclear/swmd\\_chair\\_list.pdf](http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dsiwm/document/swmdclear/swmd_chair_list.pdf) on the internet).

4. Many Valvoline Instant Oil Change, Advance Auto Parts, AutoZone, and BP ProCare (full-service stations only) locations will accept used oil. Check for other local companies that may accept used oil by going to [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) on the internet. Always call ahead to make sure the local business will accept your used oil and find out if there are any special instructions you need to follow.
5. After depositing your used oil, take the reusable container home with you to use the next time you change your oil.

Improper disposal of used oil costs money - your money! You pay in higher consumer prices, taxes for environmental cleanups and increased health care costs when wastes are improperly managed. Recycling saves money and protects the environment. So help be a part of the solution, not part of the problem!

## For More Information

1. American Petroleum Institute used motor oil Web page: [www.recycleoil.org/](http://www.recycleoil.org/)
2. U.S. EPA oil Web page: [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/oil.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/oil.htm)
3. Earth911 Web page: [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org)
4. Advanced Auto Parts recycling Web page: [www.advanceautoparts.com/english/services/recycling.asp](http://www.advanceautoparts.com/english/services/recycling.asp)
5. AutoZone recycling program Web page: [www.autozone.com/in\\_our\\_stores/fluid\\_recycling.htm](http://www.autozone.com/in_our_stores/fluid_recycling.htm)