

Used Oil & Oily Wastes

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If your day-to-day activities involve the collection, transfer, storage or disposal of oil or oily substances, then you must consider the effects your activity may have on the environment before you begin.

What sort of things cause pollution?

Poor work practices at your site during the changing of a vehicle's oil, bleeding of brakes, transfer of oil to storage containers and the storage of waste oil may be causing some of these common problems:

- Oil stained concrete or earth around work areas.
- A messy waste oil storage area where spills have occurred during liquid transfer, or lids have been left off drums and oil has overflowed.
- Sawdust or rags put down to soak up an oil spill but not properly cleaned up.
- Stormwater cesspits containing a visible sheen or layer of oil.
- An oily sheen on rainwater run-off.

How can my waste pollute the environment?

Any material or substance that is left uncovered or on the ground outside can flow or be washed by rainwater into a nearby stormwater drain where it will result in the pollution of the local stream, harbour or groundwater resource.

Oil can partially dissolve in water introducing toxic substances into the environment. These include heavy metals such as lead and chromium and hydrocarbon compounds that are a by-product of vehicle operation. If discharged, these substances can cause harm to the environment by:

- Allowing oil to seep into the land and underlying groundwater;
- Poisoning animals and plants;
- Forming an oily layer or film on surface water and preventing oxygen and sunlight from entering the water, making it difficult for animals to breathe and find food and for plants to get energy; and
- Some chemicals can build up in the bodies of plants and animals potentially causing long-term health effects.

It is important to realise that even a very small quantity of a pollutant, or just one accidental discharge can drastically alter the quality of a stream. Fish, insects and plant life can be killed, habitats destroyed and the stream can take up to ten years to recover.

You may think that your little bit of waste can't harm the environment but remember, there are many other people in the region carrying out activities similar to yours. Your waste, when combined with that of a million others, can amount to a significant amount of pollution occurring every day of the year. It is the cumulative effects of this combined discharge that causes serious damage to our environment and must be prevented.

It is illegal to cause pollution

In New Zealand the Resource Management Act (1991) is the law that protects our environment. It clearly states that every person is responsible for ensuring that their activities and those of their employees do not contribute to pollution of our environment.

Specifically, it is illegal to allow any substance to enter water either directly, through the stormwater system or via the contamination of land without prior authorisation from the Auckland Regional Council.

The Auckland Regional Council is committed to caring for our environment and is responsible for both helping the residents of our region to prevent pollution and enforcing the Resource Management Act (1991) if necessary.

By making a few simple changes to your site and daily practices you will be contributing to a pollution-free environment for us all to enjoy, both now and in the future.

Play it Safe – You can stop pollution resulting from your activities

Oily Yards

- ✓ If parts of your yard are already dirty and oily then you need to clean them. Block off access to all stormwater drains on your site and use an appropriate cleaning agent to scrub back to a clean surface. Capture the wash down and dispose of it as wastewater. Then you will be able to see spills and leaks as they occur and prevent them from causing pollution.
- ✓ Remove all soil and gravel that is visibly contaminated with oil to a commercial waste contractor for treatment and/or disposal.

Oily Work

- ✓ If possible, carry out all work undercover.
- ✓ Always use drip trays when transferring or draining oil and other liquids, and wipe up small drips and spills.

Oily Storage

- ✓ Store all waste oil and other liquids in a covered bunded area. If possible, designate a reliable staff member to drain off the clean stormwater that accumulates in the bunded area.
- ✓ If oil must be stored outside, keep lids and caps on containers, ensure containers are robust and use a secure area to avoid vandalism.

Always have a good Spill Contingency Plan with equipment handy and your staff well trained

Remember, waste oil can be recycled at Transfer Stations or your local Service Station, or via a commercial waste oil contractor (see oil refiners in the Yellow pages).