Auto Body Shops Fact Sheet

Utah Department of Environmental Quality

Promoting a Healthy Environment

Auto Body Shops are Prime Candidates for Pollution Prevention.

Typical waste generated by auto body shops includes leftover paint thinner, cleaning solvents and paint. Many, which result from painting, paint preparation and equipment cleaning, are hazardous and must be managed and disposed of legally. Reduce all types of waste to run your shop as economically and efficiently as possible. Hazardous waste reduction techniques include:

Good Housekeeping

Good housekeeping measures greatly decrease the amount of waste generated. They include:

- Keep tight fitting lids and bungs on containers to prevent chemical loss through evaporation or spillage. It also prevents contamination
- Use spigots and pumps when dispensing new materials and funnels when transferring waste to storage containers to reduce spills
- Make sure personnel are well trained
- Store products in locations that preserve shelf life
- Accumulate waste indoors or in covered areas to prevent moisture contamination
- Never mix different types of waste together. It may make recycling impossible or disposal more expensive
- Inspect all damaged vehicles for leaks before they are brought into the shop. If leaks are detected, drip pans should be used to catch them

Keep Waste Streams Segregated

Waste stream segregation is one of the simplest waste reduction techniques. Separate excess paint from leftover paint thinner to reduce paint thinner contamination

Raw Material Substitution

Consider replacing raw materials with others that reduce waste amounts or toxicity. Although water-based paints are substituted for solvent-based ones in many paint-associated industries, few provide viable alternatives in the auto-painting industry. Many solvents can be replaced with non-toxic materials.

Modify Your Process

- Mix your own paint which allows you to mix only the amount needed for a particular job
- Use more efficient spray equipment since paint over spray creates waste
- Decreasing the size of spray-gun paint cups can reduce waste generation by limiting the amount of leftover paint and decreasing solvent needed for equipment cleaning

Solvent Reuse or Replacement

Solvents can be reused prior to recycling in a variety of ways. For example:

- Used solvent can be used to rinse out spray equipment initially and then a small amount of fresh solvent can be used to clean out residue
- In cases where high purity solvents are required for cleaning certain parts, use fresh solvent and then used solvent to clean other dirtier parts
- Recycled paint thinner, although not always suitable for reuse, can be used as wash thinner

Solvent Recycling

Solvent recycling can be done on- or off-site.

- Contract with a solvent tank maintenance service to remove solvent and sludge from your tank and replace it with clean solvent
- Spent solvent can be sent off-site to commercial recyclers where most can be reprocessed and sold back to the generator at reduced cost
- Solvent recovery also can take place on-site. Commercial solvent recovery units are available in various sizes with the smallest handling five gallons of solvent per batch. Most recovery systems pay for themselves in less than two years

Non-Hazardous Waste Reduction Methods

Successful non-hazardous waste reduction methods include:

- Reuse or recycle paper
- Recycle cardboard
- Reuse or recycle 55-gallon drums

Energy and Materials Conservation Program

- Try to use the latest technology. New equipment may require less energy to operate than older equipment
- Identify all materials used in your facility. Evaluate how much is used and how much is thrown away
- Monitor water and electric meters routinely. Determine if some water- and electricity-consuming activities can be curtailed during non-production hours

For More Information, Contact:

Pollution Prevention Coordinator - (801) 536-4477
Division of Solid & Hazardous Waste - (801) 538-6170
Environmental Hotline - 1 (800) 458-0145
Small Business Assistance Program - (801) 536-4479