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# Large Auto Repair Shops Pollution Prevention Fact Sheet

Utah Department of Environmental Quality  
*Promoting a Healthy Environment*

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Automobile repair shops produce many types of waste. Some is hazardous. Other waste is not but can still damage the environment if not properly handled. All wastes require proper treatment or disposal at significant cost to the business. Wastes shops contend with include:

- Solvents, paint and paint thinners
- Antifreeze
- Scrap metal
- Batteries and other auto parts
- Oils and oil filters
- Fuels
- Acids and alkalis, including contaminated rags and towels

All the waste has one thing in common: it represents loss of resources and money. Loss can be minimized by avoiding waste production whenever possible, the concept behind pollution prevention programs. Businesses nationwide have implemented pollution prevention and waste reduction programs. Reducing waste generated by your business can help you:

- Reduce operating costs
- Reduce waste disposal costs
- Reduce long-term liability
- Sustain environmental quality
- Improve workplace health and safety
- Project a positive public image

## Getting Started

Getting off to a good start is crucial to the success of any endeavor. Important tips when starting a waste-reduction program include:

- Make a commitment to pollution prevention from the top down
- Involve employees in designing and implementing pollution prevention measures
- Provide training in waste reduction techniques and practices
- Establish incentives encouraging workers to use waste reduction techniques and suggest ways to reduce waste
- Assess the shop's waste. Identify sources, types and amounts produced

## **Establish Good Housekeeping Practices**

Improving a business's housekeeping practices is often the easiest and least expensive way to reduce waste. Good housekeeping includes inventory control and efficient operating procedures. Housekeeping tips include:

- Keep storage and work areas clean and well organized. Label all containers properly.
- Inspect materials upon delivery, and immediately return unacceptable ones to the supplier.
- Keep accurate records of material usage to measure reductions in use. Mark the purchase date on each container and adopt a "first in, first out" policy so older materials are used before new ones are opened. Assign someone to distribute and keep track of materials.
- to avoid future loss.
- Locate and repair all leaks to prevent raw material loss. Practice preventive maintenance. Keep all containers covered to prevent evaporation and spillage.
- Keep waste streams separated to increase potential for reuse, recycling or treatment. Don't contaminate nonhazardous materials with hazardous ones as all then must be treated as hazardous waste.
- Install flow meters, flow control devices and shut off nozzles to reduce water usage.

## **Solvents**

Auto repair shops typically use solvents in a variety of operations, including parts cleaning, degreasing and painting. Many of these solvents may be classified as hazardous waste, requiring expensive treatment and or disposal. Pollution prevention strategies can be used to reduce toxicity and quantity of spent solvents requiring disposal. You can:

- Try to find one multi-purpose solvent that serves a variety of uses, rather than having a different solvent for each operation.
- Substitute less hazardous substitutes for solvent cleaners. Consider water-based cleaners or water-soluble cutting fluids, or install a pressure wash system.
- Extend the life of solvent baths by pre-cleaning parts with rags or pre-soaking with old solvent to remove most dirt.
- Minimize cleaning solvent lost during drainage of cleaned parts. Remove parts from the bath slowly to prevent spills, install drip trays or racks near bath, return drainage to the bath.
- Use on-site recovery techniques to make solvents reusable. Common recovery methods include decanting, filtration and distillation.

## **Other Shop Wastes**

### **Oils**

- Use drip pans to catch lube oils for reuse or recycling. Handle carefully to avoid spills.
- Contract with a reputable recycler to collect used oil.
- Don't mix other fluids with used oil.
- Contact the Used Oil Program, Utah Division of Solid & Hazardous Waste, P.O. Box 144880, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114 or call toll free: 1(800) 458-0145

### **Caustic Cleaners**

- Substitute detergent-based solution for caustic cleaning solution.
- Clean parts mechanically rather than chemically when possible.

### **Others**

- Take all scrap metal to a metal recycler.
- Make sure all Freon is properly handled and recycled.
- Arrange to have waste antifreeze picked up by a recycler.
- Recycle spent lead-acid batteries. On a weight basis, spent batteries are one of the largest categories of hazardous waste generated by auto repair shops.

### **Follow-up**

- Waste reduction is always possible. Less polluting materials, equipment and procedures are constantly being developed, so wastes that are difficult or costly to control today may be easily eliminated tomorrow. Stay alert for such developments.
- When buying new equipment, look for items that minimize both the amount of toxic materials used and the amount of waste produced.
- Reassess the shop's operations and waste handling practices periodically.
- Publicize the shop's commitment to waste reduction. Customers will feel good about doing business with a company that is environmentally responsible.

### **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