

Farmers Have Tough Time With Waste Oil

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Special To Lancaster Farming

YORK (York Co.) — Waste oil disposal has become a big problem for farmers in recent years because of strict environmental regulations that have been adopted to protect air and groundwater quality.

The quantity of waste oil generated every year by vehicle fleets, including much farm equipment, has increased steadily, and it is becoming more difficult to get rid of it all the time. It is important for service departments to protect themselves by knowing proper disposal methods for waste oil.

Fortunately, waste oil can be recycled as lubricating oil, or, in some cases, burned as fuel. This helps conserve fuel supplies while providing a safe way to dispose of a toxic waste material.

Typical waste oils include used crankcase oil, transmission fluid, hydraulic oil, and gear lube. Some compounds in waste oil are poisonous and can cause problems if released into the environment.

How can waste oil damage the environment? Waste oil poured on the ground or roads can be carried through the soil by rainwater and ultimately may contaminate wells used for drinking water, livestock watering, or irrigation. Improperly disposed waste oil may end up in a landfill where it can leak out to contaminate groundwater and surface water.

Modern waste oils may contain heavy metals such as lead, zinc, chromium, and cadmium, which are toxic to fish, wildlife, and

some crops. Hydrocarbons in waste oil can cause taste and odor problems and foul groundwater and streams. A concentration of only one part per million, waste oil can cause taste and odor problems in drinking water. This means that four quarts of oil from a typical automotive oil change can contaminate a million gallons of drinking water — as much as the average family uses in five years.

What methods should be used to properly dispose of waste oil? The following guidelines are recommended by several state environmental agencies:

- **Storage:** Used lubricating oils, including crankcase oil, hydraulic fluid, gear lube, and transmission fluid should be kept in a container with a tight fitting lid. Never add solvent, anti-freeze, or paint thinner to the used oil container. Solvents are much more toxic than waste oil and should always be disposed of at a regulated collection center. Contact your state regulatory agency for location of the nearest hazardous materials collection center which will accept solvents or other chemicals.

- **Some states** require waste oil tanks to be labeled, and may limit the quantity of waste oil that can be sorted in one location. In general, once a 55-gallon drum is filled, it should be properly disposed of within ninety (90) days.

- **It is a good idea** to store sorbent materials, such as sorbent pads or "kitty litter," near waste oil tanks or drums to allow quick cleanup or spills.

- **Burning:** As long as waste oil

is not contaminated by solvents or chemicals, meets CPA specifications, most states allow on-site burning of waste oil for heating. However, other states place restrictions on burning, so regulations should be carefully checked before burning waste oil.

With the proper equipment, waste oil can be blended with No. 2 fuel oil and burned in an approved waste oil burner. Since waste oil may contain water, grit, and other impurities that can damage conventional equipment it should never be burned in a conventional oil burner or diesel engine.

Many states prohibit burning waste oil collected from offsite sources, so you can burn only your own waste oil. Also, many states require permits for waste oil burning to insure compliance with air quality regulations.

- **Disposal:** For those who gen-

erate less than five gallons of waste oil at a time, several states allow small quantities of waste oil to be disposed of at a service station or approved collection center. Several states require service stations to accept a limited quantity of waste oil from the public, unless their collection tanks are full. Other states rely on voluntary cooperation from service stations to accept waste oil. Since dealers usually have to pay to dispose of the waste oil, finding a disposal location is getting more difficult.

For most commercial or municipal waste oil generators, arrangements can be made with a licensed waste oil transporter to pick the waste oil at your location. Waste oil transporters are usually listed in the yellow pages and will quote prices for disposal, so it pays to shop around.

It is a good idea to keep accurate records of quantities and

types of waste oil disposed of, especially hauler invoices, receipts, or manifests. The waste oil hauler should include his license numbers on all records, so you can prove that the oil was legally disposed of.

If you are unsure of where to dispose of waste oil, call your state environmental agency or the EPA information line (800) (424-9346).

Waste oil collectors usually take the oil to reprocessors who filter the oil and blend additives to allow it to be reused as lubricating oil. Recycling makes sense — it takes 42 gallons of crude oil to produce the same amount of lubricating oil provided by re-refining just one gallon of used motor oil.

If the waste oil meets EPA specifications, some waste oil collectors blend waste oil with heating oil to sell as low-grade heating oil for industry, ships, or greenhouses.

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