

SAFE STORAGE AND DISPOSAL OF USED OILS: PPG8

POLLUTION PREVENTION GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to help everyone that handles used oils, from people carrying out a single engine oil change to large industrial users. They are jointly produced by the Environment Agency for England and Wales, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Environment and Heritage Service in Northern Ireland, referred to as the Agency or Agencies. Compliance with these guidelines will reduce the risk of oil pollution of surface waters, groundwater, sewers and drains. Further advice may be obtained from your local Agency office. Contact details can be found at the end of these guidelines.

1. GENERAL

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990¹, the Agencies are responsible for protecting controlled waters from pollution and for preventing pollution of the environment and harm to human health from waste management activities. Controlled waters include all watercourses, canals, lakes, lochs, coastal waters and water contained in underground strata (groundwater). Under the Duty of Care (see Reference 1), those responsible for waste must keep it safely and prevent its illegal disposal by others.

2. OIL IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Oil damages river life including birds, fish and other wildlife. It is one of the most commonly reported types of water pollution and causes more than a quarter of all water pollution incidents. Careless disposal of oil into drainage systems, onto land or to watercourses is an offence. Because of the way it spreads, even a small quantity can cause a lot of harm – a gallon of oil can completely cover a one-acre lake. Cleaning up oil pollution can be expensive and the Agencies have the power to recover the cost from the polluter. Used oil may have other hazardous properties; for example, used engine oil is classified as carcinogenic and should be handled and stored with care.

Do not tip oil into any drains or onto land, as this will result in the pollution of rivers or groundwater.

3. DISPOSING OF DOMESTIC USED OIL

a. Engine oil

Used engine oil from car maintenance should be taken to an oil bank for recycling. These can be found at most civic amenity sites, at some garages and at selected large car accessory retailers. Your local authority recycling officer should be able to tell you the location of your nearest oil bank. Alternatively, contact the Oil Bank Helpline on freephone 0800 663366 or on the Internet, www.oilbankline.org.uk for information. Do not contaminate used oil with other materials such as white spirit, paint or solvents, as this makes recycling extremely difficult.

b. Vegetable oil

Small amounts of vegetable cooking oil or animal fat can be used to prepare food for birds by soaking or frying pieces of bread in the used oil. Some civic amenity sites have facilities for the collection of vegetable oil. Contact your local authority recycling officer for details.

4. DISPOSING OF COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USED OIL

In most cases, used oil from commercial and industrial sources will be classified as a special waste under the Special Waste Regulations 1996. There are specific requirements for the movement, treatment and disposal of special wastes. The licensed waste contractor collecting the used oil normally deals with these requirements and should be able to advise on the correct procedures. Further advice on the management of special waste is available from the Agencies (see Reference 2).

a. Industrial oil

Used oil is a valuable material and should be treated as such. Larger quantities of used oil such as hydraulic fluid or lubricants from lorries, buses or mechanical plant should be stored securely to await collection by a registered waste carrier, who may pay for the oil. There are specialist companies that will collect used cutting oils to treat and recover the oil. Emulsified cutting oils are highly polluting in water and great care should be taken in their disposal.

b. Vegetable oil

Cooking oils from major users, such as fish and chip shops, can be collected by specialist contractors for reprocessing. Used vegetable oil must not be disposed of to the surface water drain and may not be discharged to the foul sewer without the prior approval of the sewerage undertaker.

c. Garages and workshops

Sites such as garages can generate large quantities of used oil. This oil can be collected by a registered waste carrier or, alternatively, it may be feasible to use it as a fuel for space heating. This will require adequate storage to balance

¹ Except for Northern Ireland, where different legislation applies.

the supply with seasonal demands and will need an appropriate burner. Such installations require authorisation from the local authority in England and Wales, and SEPA in Scotland. Further information on handling wastes from garages is given in PPG19 - Reference 3.

d. Transformers

Electrical transformers use a specialist oil. Older transformers may contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). If PCBs are present, the transformer oil is likely to be classified as special waste (see Reference 2) and will require specialist handling. Advice on the disposal of transformer oil should be sought from the Agencies.

5. OIL STORAGE AND PIPELINES

In all cases, care must be taken when transferring waste oil to storage facilities to avoid spillage. Any spills should be dealt with using absorbent materials. Where possible, above ground facilities should be used, as underground oil tanks and pipelines may be subject to damage and corrosion, leading to unseen leakage.

a. Above ground storage

Separate guidelines for above ground oil storage tanks are available (PPG2 - Reference 4). Any oil storage tank or oil stored in drums should be sited on an impervious base within an oil-tight secondary containment system such as a bund. The bund walls should not have a damp-proof course and there should be no drainage outlet from the bund itself. The bund should be capable of containing at least 110% of the volume of the oil container. If more than one container is stored, the bund should be capable of storing 110% of the largest tank or 25% of the total storage capacity, whichever is the greater. Fill pipes, funnels, draw pipes and sight gauges should be enclosed within the bund and any tank vent pipe should be directed downwards into it.

b. Underground tanks and pipes

When used, appropriate protective measures against damage and corrosion should be provided, such as a double skin tank, double-wall piping or laying the pipe in a conduit. Regular inspection and testing should also be carried out.

6. REFERENCES

1. Waste Management, the Duty of Care, A code of practice. (revised 1996), ISBN 0-11-753210X: The Stationery Office, Tel: 08706 005522
2. A guide to the Special Waste Regulations 1996 (as amended): Environment Agency
A guide to the Special Waste Regulations 1996: SEPA
A guide to the Special Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998: Environment and Heritage Service
3. PPG19: Garages and vehicle service centres
4. PPG2: Above ground oil storage tanks
References 2-4 are available free of charge from the Agencies

All the Agencies' pollution prevention guidance notes are available on the web sites listed below.

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HEAD OFFICE

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THAMES

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AREA OFFICES

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SOUTH WEST AREA

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SOUTH EAST AREA

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ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE SERVICE

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The 24-hour emergency hotline number for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

EMERGENCY HOTLINE

0800 80 70 60



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

