

## WHAT STANDARDS SHOULD MY BUSINESS FOLLOW?

If your business generates or handles used oil, there are management standards developed by the EPA for businesses that handle used oil.

The management standards are common sense, good business practices designed to ensure safe handling of used oil, maximize recycling and minimize disposal. These standards apply to all handlers (regardless of amount or other specific requirements):

Label all containers and tanks as USED OIL.

Don't allow containers to rust, leak or deteriorate.

Store in used oil specific tanks and storage containers or regulated hazardous waste units.

## OIL LEAKS AND SPILLS

Take steps to prevent leaks and spills and keep sorbent materials readily available.

If a spill or leak occurs, stop flowing from the source.

If a leak from a container or tank can't be stopped, put the container in another holding container or tank.

Contain spilled oil.

Clean up and recycle the used oil as you would have before it spilled. If recycling is not possible, make sure the used oil is not a hazardous waste and dispose of it appropriately.



Improperly disposed of oil containers

## RECYCLING USED OIL IS GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY.

*Here's proof:*

- *Re-refining used oil takes only one-third the energy of refining crude oil to lubricant quality.*
- *It takes 42 gallons of crude oil, but only one gallon of used oil, to produce 2.5 quarts of new, high-quality lubricating oil.*
- *One gallon of used oil processed for fuel contains about 140,000 British Thermal Units (Btu) of energy.\**

### **\*Common Energy Units**

**1 barrel (42 gal.) of crude oil = 5,800,000 Btu**

**1 gallon of heating oil = 139,000 Btu  
and**

**1 barrel of residual fuel oil = 6,287,000 Btu**

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For more information about used oil, visit  
[www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/usedoil/usedoil.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/usedoil/usedoil.pdf).



This fact sheet contains valuable information for businesses such as service stations, fleet maintenance facilities, and "quick lube" shops that generate and handle used oil. It summarizes the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) used oil management standards - a set of "good housekeeping" requirements for used oil handlers. These requirements are detailed in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 279. Small businesses should also refer to EPA's Emergency Response Division's Information Line at (202) 260-2342 for information on how to manage spills.

## MANAGING USED OIL

Advice for Small Businesses and Households



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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
SOLID AND HAZARDOUS WASTE  
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CONFEDERATED SALISH AND



Abandoned service station where soil has been contaminated with used oil.

## WHAT IS USED OIL?

According to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the definition of used oil is: any oil refined from crude oil or used synthetic oil, and as a result of that use, is contaminated by physical or chemical impurities. Dirt, metal scrapings, water, and chemicals get mixed in with the oil during normal use, therefore requiring proper replacement and disposal.

To meet the EPA's definition of used oil, a substance must meet each of the following three criteria:

**Origin:** used oil must have been refined from crude oil or made from synthetic materials. Animal and vegetable oils are excluded from EPA's definition of used oil.\*

**Use:** based on how and if the oil was used. Oils used as lubricants, hydraulic fluids, heat transfer fluids, buoyants, and for other similar purposes are considered used oil. Unused oil from virgin oil storage tanks, cleaning agents, solvents and petroleum-derived products (antifreeze and kerosene) are excluded.\*

**Contaminants:** used oil becomes contaminated as a result of being used with either physical or chemical impurities. This aspect of EPA's definition includes residues and contaminants generated from handling, storing, and processing used oil. Physical contaminants include metal shavings, sawdust or dirt. Chemical contaminants could include solvents, halogens or saltwater.

Oils that do not meet EPA's definition of used oil can still

## CAN USED OIL BE RECYCLED?

Yes. An estimated 380 million gallons of used oil are recycled each year. Once oil has been used, it can be collected, recycled and used over and over again. Recycled used oil can be either used for the same job or a completely different task. For example, used motor oil can be re-refined and sold as motor oil or processed for furnace fuel oil. Aluminum rolling oils also can be filtered on site and used over again.

Used oil can be recycled in the following ways:

- **Reconditioned on site:** which involves removing impurities from the used oil and using it again. While this form of recycling might not restore the oil to its original condition, it does prolong its life.
- **Inserted into a petroleum refinery:** which involves introducing used oil as a feedstock into either the front end of the process or the coker to produce gasoline and coke.
- **Re-refined:** removing impurities so it can be used as a base stock for new lubricating oil. Re-refining prolongs the life of the oil resource indefinitely and is the preferred option because it reuses the oil to make the same product while using less energy and less virgin oil.
- **Processed and burned for energy recovery:** involves removing water and particulates so that used oil can be burned as fuel to generate heat or to power industrial operations. This form of recycling is not preferred because it only enables the oil to be reused once. Nonetheless, valuable energy is provided (about the same as provided by normal heating oil).



## DOES MY BUSINESS HANDLE USED OIL?

The following are descriptions of different types of businesses that handle used oil:

- **Generators:** businesses that handle used oil through commercial or industrial operations or from the maintenance of vehicles and equipment. This is the largest segment of the used oil industry and includes: repair shops, service stations, quick-lube shops, government motor pools, grocery stores, metal working industries and boat marinas. Excluded are farmers who produce less than an average of 25 gallons of used oil per month and individuals who generate used oil through the maintenance of their personal vehicles and equipment.
- **Collection centers and aggregation points:** facilities that accept small amounts of used oil and store it until enough is collected to ship it elsewhere for recycling. Collection centers typically accept used oil from multiple sources that include both businesses and individuals. Aggregation points collect oil only from places run by the same owner or operator and from individuals.
- **Transporters:** companies that pick-up used oil from all sources and deliver it to re-refineries, processors or burners. Transfer facilities are any structure or area where used oil is held for longer than 24 hours, but not longer than 35 days. Examples include loading docks and parking areas.
- **Re-refiners and processors:** facilities that blend or remove impurities from used oil so that it can be burned for energy or reused. Included in this category are re-refiners who process used oil so it can be reused in a new product, such as a lubricant, and recycled again and again.
- **Burners:** burn used oil for energy in boilers, industrial furnaces or in hazardous waste incinerators.
- **Marketers:** handlers who either: direct shipments of used oil to be burned as fuel in regulated devices, or, claim that certain EPA specifications are met for used oil to be burned for energy recovery in devices that are not regulated. They also sometimes help move shipments of used oil to burners. By definition, marketers must also fall into at least one of the