

NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY

THAMES REGION

**NRA**

POLLUTION PREVENTION GUIDELINES

SAFE STORAGE AND DISPOSAL OF USED OILS

These notes have been drawn up to assist all who handle used oils, from a single engine oil change to large industrial users. They should be complied with in order to reduce the risk of oil pollution of surface waters or ground waters, sewers and drains. Further advice may be obtained by contacting your local authority waste management section, or from your local National Rivers Authority Water Quality Office, details of which will be found at the end of these guidelines.

1. GENERAL

The NRA is responsible for the protection of "controlled waters" from pollution under the Water Resources Act of 1991, and it is an offence under the Act to cause such pollution, either deliberately or accidentally. "Controlled waters" include all watercourses and water contained in underground strata.

2. OIL POLLUTION

Oil is one of the most commonly reported types of water pollution and causes nearly a quarter of all pollution incidents. Careless disposal of oil into drainage systems, onto land or to watercourses is not only an offence but can be harmful to river birds, fish and other wildlife. 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. Clean-up operations can be expensive, the costs of which will be recovered from the offender.

3. DISPOSING OF USED OIL

Do not tip oil into any drains or onto land, as this will result in pollution of rivers or an underground water resource.

- a. Used engine oil arising from car maintenance should be taken to an oil bank. These will be found at most civic amenity sites and at some garages and certain major car accessory retailers. Your local authority recycling officer should be able to provide you with details of where these may be found. It is important not to contaminate used oil with other materials, such as white spirit, paint or solvents, as this makes recycling extremely difficult.

- b. Larger quantities of used oil, such as hydraulic fluid or lubricants from lorries, buses or mechanical plant should be stored securely for collection by a registered contractor who will pay for the oil. Used oil is a valuable asset and should be treated as such.
- c. Small amounts of vegetable cooking oil or animal fats can be used as bird food by using it to soak or fry bits of bread. Cooking oils from major users such as fish and chip shops can be collected to be reprocessed to cooking oil or animal feed.
- d. At sites such as garages, used oil can be generated in large quantities. This oil can be collected by a registered contractor, or alternatively it may be feasible to use it as a fuel for space heating. This will require adequate storage to balance the supply with the variation in demand through the year and will need an appropriate burner. Such installations require authorization by the local authority environmental health department.
- e. Transformer oil is a special oil used in electrical transformers. Older transformers used Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) and if these are present they require expert handling to avoid serious pollution. Advice should be sought from the local authority or the NRA.

4. OIL STORAGE AND PIPELINES

- a. Separate guidelines for above ground oil storage tanks are available. In general any oil storage tank and oil stored in drums should be sited on an impervious base within an oil-tight bund. No damp course should be provided in the bund wall structure and there should be no drainage outlet. The bunded area should be capable of containing 110% of the volume of the tank or the largest drum; any fill pipes or funnels, draw pipes and sight gauges should be enclosed within its curtilage. Any tank vent pipe should be directed downwards into the bund.
- b. Underground oil pipelines may be subject to damage and corrosion and above ground pipelines are preferred. When this is not practicable, appropriate protective measures against damage and corrosion, such as double wall piping or laying the pipe in a conduit should be provided.

For further information, please contact your nearest NRA Water Quality office at:-

READING	0734 311422	OXFORD	0865 749400
WALTHAM CROSS	0992 35566	AMERSHAM	0494 722361
LONDON SE	081 310 5500	GUILDFORD	0483 577655

... or at all times on Freefone 0800-252768

Headquarters: *Kings Meadow House, Kings Meadow Road,
Reading, Berks. RG1 8DQ
Telephone 0734 535000*

