



Old Vehicles and Used Batteries

Pollution Prevention - actionSHEET 5

If your activities include collecting and storing used vehicle parts and old vehicle batteries, it is really important that you consider the effects these activities may have on the environment.

What sort of things cause pollution?

Poor work practices with mechanical parts such as differentials, gearboxes and car batteries are responsible for some common problems:

- Old and broken batteries stacked in the open so that acid can leak out of them into the ground
- An oily sheen, visible on rainwater run-off from areas used to store parts, contaminating stormwater sumps
- Oil-stained concrete or earth around work areas
- A messy storage area where fluid leaks and spills have occurred while parts have been left stacked in the yard.

How your waste can pollute the environment

Any material or waste that is left uncovered or on the ground outside can flow or be washed by rain into a nearby stormwater drain. Stormwater drains discharge into local streams or to the coast. Any waste material that gets into the stormwater system will end up polluting these environments.

Oil can partially dissolve in water, introducing toxic substances into the environment. These substances include heavy metals such as lead and chromium and hydrocarbons, which are a by product of vehicle operation.

If discharged, these substances cause harm to the environment by:

- Allowing acid and lead from leaking batteries to seep into the land and underlying groundwater
- Poisoning animals and plants
- Forming an oily layer or film on surface water and preventing oxygen and sunlight from entering the water. This makes it difficult for animals to breathe and find food, and for plants to get energy
- Chemicals building up in the bodies of plants and animals, causing long-term health effects or rendering them unfit for human consumption.

Even a very small quantity of a pollutant, or just one accidental discharge, can drastically alter the quality of a stream. Fish, insects and plants can be killed and habitats destroyed. A waterway can take years to recover.

You may think that your little bit of waste can't harm the environment, but combine it with the waste produced by others doing the same sorts of things and it adds up to a significant amount of pollution occurring in Southland, every day of the year.

The cumulative effects of combined discharges cause serious damage to our environment and must be prevented.

It is illegal to cause pollution

In New Zealand the Resource Management Act 1991 is the law that protects our environment. It makes every person responsible for ensuring that their activities and those of their employees do not pollute our environment.

Specifically, it is illegal to allow any substance to enter water, either directly, through the stormwater system or via the contamination of land without prior authorisation from Environment Southland.

Environment Southland is committed to caring for our environment and is responsible for both helping the residents of our region to prevent pollution and enforcing the Resource Management Act if necessary.

By making a few simple changes to your site and daily practices, you can help contribute to a pollution-free environment that everyone can enjoy, both now and in the future.



Play it safe

You can stop your activities causing pollution

Cleaning Up

- Clean the parts of your yard that are dirty and oily.
- Take all soil and gravel that is visibly contaminated with oil to a commercial waste contractor for treatment and/or disposal.

Containment

- If possible, store all parts and batteries under cover on a paved or sealed surface.
- Always drain all fluids from all vehicle parts and dispose of fluids properly.
- Store all waste oil and other liquids in a covered, bunded area. Use an interceptor system to prevent any contaminated water entering the stormwater network.
- If oil must be stored outside, keep lids and caps on containers, ensure containers are robust and use a secure area to avoid vandalism.
- Store acid carefully in sealed, corrosive-proof containers and regularly dispose of it via a reputable commercial waste contractor.
- Clean up all spilled material immediately and dispose of waste into a bin, ensuring that it won't leak out.
- **Avoid** burning parts or wastes from vehicles. **It is illegal to burn tyres and coated wire.**

Batteries and waste oil can be recycled – contact Environment Southland to find out more.



Old car parts can leak oil into the ground



ALWAYS have a good Spill Response Procedure. Keep spill equipment handy and make sure your staff are well trained.

Environment Southland can help your company develop a Spill Response Procedure and provide guidance on these matters. Call 0800 76 88 45 and ask to speak to a Pollution Prevention Officer.

Published by:

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January 2013

Further Information

For a copy of the **Pollution Prevention Guide** or more information on pollution prevention, contact Environment Southland, telephone 03 211 5115 or 0800 76 88 45 or visit our website at www.es.govt.nz.