

factsheet 1

recycling used oil – why?

Cars, trucks, farm machines and boats all need regular lubricating oil changes. Do you remember to recycle your used oil after an oil change?

Around 500 million litres of lubricating oil is sold in Australia each year. While some engines such as two-stroke lawn mower engines burn oil completely, others like motor vehicle engines and machinery produce large volumes of used oil that can be reclaimed and reused. Industry and the community generate at least 250 million litres of used oil in Australia each year.

Disposing of used oil the wrong way has the potential to pollute land, water and infrastructure, so we need to recover and recycle as much of it as possible. Consider that it takes only one litre of oil to contaminate one million litres of water (which is about half the size of an olympic swimming pool), and a single automotive oil change produces 4 to 5 litres of used oil.

How valuable is used oil?

Used oil, or 'sump oil' as it is sometimes called, should not be thrown away. Although it gets dirty, used oil can still be cleaned and re-used. In fact, recycled used oil can be used as an industrial burner fuel, hydraulic oil, incorporated into other products or re-refined back into new lubricating oil.



Used oil collection facilities are being established throughout Australia, with over 450 sites already operational nationally



Used oil stored in containers for long periods of time can create a fire hazard or oil leaks

Used oil is hazardous

You must be careful when changing your oil because used oil is hazardous. Lubricating oil picks up a variety of hazardous contaminants when used in engines and transmissions including lead, dioxins, benzene and polycyclic aromatics. Always change your oil in a well ventilated area, wear gloves, make sure the area is enclosed to prevent spills escaping or use a drip tray, place your used oil into its original container (or similar) and take it to your nearest recycling facility.

Leaving used oil sitting in your garage is also a good way of creating a fire hazard or oil leaks - so don't forget to recycle it!



oil, soil & water.....they just don't mix!

How can I recycle my used oil?

Australians are good at recycling used oil. About 80% of the used oil generated was collected and recycled last year. Used oil disposed of inappropriately, dumped in landfill or stored on farms and in garages can cause harm to the environment, so it is important that we recycle as much of it as possible.

If you only produce a small amount of used oil from vehicles or farm machinery, you can take it to your local used oil facility run by your local council or shire. Usually the facility will be located at the landfill, waste transfer station or works depot – check on the web or hotline below for a facility near you.

Some used oil facilities will also take your oil filters and oily rags. Check this out when you next recycle your oil. Small companies like service stations usually produce more used oil than a local facility is able to take. Instead, used oil collectors will visit and remove the used oil (this may be free because used oil is valuable).

What shouldn't I do?

In some areas of Australia, used oil has been sprayed on roads as a dust suppressant, to clean tools or to protect timber posts and fences from termites. These practices are harmful because the used oil can then enter the soil and leach through to contaminate the ground water.

No other wastes should ever be allowed to mix with used oil. Contamination by water or other chemicals may mean the used oil can't be recycled. It is also dangerous to leave used oil stored in containers for long periods of time. Many materials can degrade when in contact with used oil, increasing the risk of a spill.



Disposing of used oil into the sewer can effect the quality of discharge to local waterways

What is the Product Stewardship for Oil Program?

The *Product Stewardship for Oil Program* provides incentives to increase used oil recycling in the Australian community. This will ensure the environmentally sustainable management of used oil. As part of the Australian Government's commitment to managing used oil, a levy-benefit system has been introduced where a levy collected on new oil funds benefit payments to used oil recyclers.

Complementing the benefit payments is transitional assistance funding, where \$35 million over 7 years is being provided to encourage environmentally sustainable management and re-refining of used oil. Some of the initiatives being undertaken include recycling technology, research and development and the establishment of collection facilities for used oil throughout Australia, with over 450 sites already operational nationally.



Used oil collection facilities enable us to recycle as much of our used oil as possible

Where can I get more information on recycling oil?

To get more information on used oil and find out where your nearest used oil collection facility is, visit the *Product Stewardship for Oil Program* website at www.ea.gov.au/oilrecycling, email oilrecycling@ea.gov.au or phone the Department of the Environment and Heritage's Community Information Unit on 1800 803 772.