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# Waste oil and other automotive products

## General information

Many automotive products are flammable and cannot be disposed of in drains, storm water sewers, or the garbage, nor should they be disposed of in septic systems. Most contain toxic ingredients that will pose an environmental hazard if they are disposed of improperly.

Oil poured onto the ground or down storm sewers may eventually find its way into lakes, rivers, streams, or groundwater, where it can contaminate drinking water and harm living organisms. Never use dirty oil to kill weeds or to oil roads.

This fact sheet explains how to safely and responsibly dispose of waste oil, including crankcase oil, hydraulic oil, gear lubricant, and transmission fluid. It also describes how to dispose of antifreeze, auto body filler, batteries, brake fluid, gasoline, paints, parts cleaners, and waxes.

Many of these products can be reused or recycled. Alternatively, they may be disposed of through hazardous waste collection programs (*Clean Sweep* programs) designed to collect hazardous materials from residences and small businesses. Contact your county extension office, solid waste department, or the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for Clean Sweep schedules.

## Automotive/machine oil

Dispose of used oil by recycling it. Oil never wears out, it just gets dirty. And recycling is easy.

Drain the oil and transfer it to a container with a tight-fitting lid (such as a plastic jug or metal can). Auto supply stores and automotive service stations often accept waste oil for recycling. All insoluble machine oils—including crankcase oil, hydraulic oil, gear lubricant and transmission fluid—are acceptable for oil recycling. Also, hazardous waste collection programs collect these oils.

## Antifreeze

Antifreeze should be recycled. Collect it in a container with a tight lid. Hazardous waste collection programs and many auto supply stores and automotive service stations accept used antifreeze. Wisconsin law bans disposal in landfills.

Antifreeze is highly poisonous to people and animals. When antifreeze is spilled on a driveway or other surface, it may poison children, pets, and other animals attracted by its sweet taste.

## Auto body filler

Mix resin and hardener in a well-ventilated area and allow it to harden. Dispose of it in the trash.

## Batteries

Recycle car and small engine batteries by trading in your old battery at the store where you buy a new one. Automotive supply stores and retail battery outlets usually accept old automotive batteries. Alternatively, hazardous waste collection programs accept these batteries.

Car batteries may contain strong acids that can cause severe burns. Most batteries also contain lead or other hazardous metals. Wisconsin law bans disposal of lead-acid (automotive) batteries in landfills.

## Brake fluid

Brake fluid should be collected in a container with a tight lid and taken to a collection site that accepts brake fluid.

## Contaminated gasoline

Recycle contaminated gasoline by letting the solid contaminants and water settle, then carefully pouring off the gasoline. Use the recycled gasoline in small engines (not automobiles) by gradually mixing small quantities with clean gasoline. A ratio of one part contaminated to five parts clean should work well. Commercial gasoline recycling is available in some communities where a solvent recycling business is located.

Gasoline is extremely flammable. Do not use gasoline as a cleaner or solvent. Instead, use a parts cleaner that has a lower flammability rating, or use a product with a low hazard rating, such as a detergent. When buying parts cleaners, look for signal words—CAUTION, WARNING, and DANGER—to help you decide which product to buy.

Because it is highly flammable, do not use gasoline to kill weeds, and do not mix gasoline with waste oil. If you need to store gasoline, store it only in small amounts and in specially constructed gas cans. Do not dispose of gasoline in trash or down a drain.

## Parts cleaner, auto paint, car polish, and wax

Use up large leftover quantities of these products by sharing them with neighbors, with high school or technical school auto classes, or with service stations.

Parts cleaners, paints, polishes, and waxes are flammable and toxic, so do not throw them in the trash or down a drain. Very small quantities of liquids can be disposed of by evaporating them. More viscous products such as paints, polishes, and waxes can be hardened. Hardening locks the chemicals into a solid mass which can then be put in the trash.

## How to harden products or evaporate small amounts of liquid

- Move the container to a sheltered, secure outdoor area away from flames, children, and pets.
- Open the lid and allow the liquid or paste to dry.
- Discard the hardened material in the trash.

## How to dispose of aerosol cans

Cleaners and polishes in aerosol cans need special attention during disposal. Partially full aerosol cans may explode when hot. If you can't use or share your aerosol product, ensure there is a cap to cover the spray nozzle and store the can in a cool location until you can properly dispose of it at a hazardous waste collection site.

## Household hazardous waste collection programs

Home and farm products that contain chemical hazards can be taken to county-run hazardous materials collection facilities operating *Clean Sweep* programs. Some counties have permanent collection facilities and others have facilities that operate intermittently. Contact your county office or the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (608-224-4545) for collection schedules. Alternatively, contact a private hazardous waste hauler who will make individual pickups for a fee.

## For more information

Solid & Hazardous Waste Education Center  
[www4.uwm.edu/shwec/](http://www4.uwm.edu/shwec/)  
 715-346-2793

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection  
[http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Clean\\_Sweep/index.aspx](http://datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Clean_Sweep/index.aspx)  
 608-224-4545

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources <http://dnr.wi.gov/>  
 608-266-2621

## University of Wisconsin-Extension publications

*Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home: Home and Garden Pesticides* (G3453)

*Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home: Paints, Solvents, and Other Home Improvement Products* (G3454)

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**Disposing of Hazardous Wastes from the Home: Waste Oil And Other Automotive Products** (G3456) R-06-2012