

Automotive Care Businesses

Automotive pollutants such as oil, grease, anti-freeze and heavy metals can enter our stormwater system and end up in our local waterways and eventually Puget Sound. These pollutants can contaminate both surface and groundwater bodies, affecting not only our local fish and wildlife, but our drinking water sources as well. To prevent pollution of our water bodies, follow these best management practices:



Work Site Management:

- Locate the storm drains on or near your property.
- Do not allow hazardous materials to flow into these drains.
- Examine your business for sources of pollution.
- Perform automotive projects under cover and in a controlled area.
- Identify specific activities with the potential to cause spills or release pollutants such as oil, grease, fuel, etc.
- Post signs and train employees on how to prevent and clean up spills during these activities. Sweep or vacuum the shop floor daily.
- Use a damp mop to clean work areas.
- Never hose down surfaces into the street, gutter or storm drain.
- Pour mop water into a sink, toilet or landscaped area.
- Never dispose of water in a parking lot, street, gutter or storm drain.
- Use non-toxic cleaning products whenever possible.

Preventing Leaks and Spills:

- Train employees on how to recognize potential spill hazards, and document training activities. Always place drip pans beneath vehicles to capture leaking or draining fluids.
- Empty drip pans into a labeled, sealed container before they are full.
- Check equipment, wipe up spills and repair leaks on a daily basis.
- Keep an approved spill kit readily available in the work area.
- Use absorbent cleaning agents instead of water to clean work areas, and dispose of soiled material properly.

Spill Clean-Up:

- Follow your hazardous materials response plan, as filed with your local fire department.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the plan and are well trained in its safe implementation. For small spills, contain the contamination and use dry absorbent material to soak up the spill, and then sweep the area and dispose of properly.
- For large spills, call the Washington State Department of Ecology at 1-360-407-6300.

Fueling Areas:

- Operate fueling areas so that spills can be contained and runoff cannot carry spills into the street, gutter or storm drain.
- Service drain filters beneath the fueling canopy and replace absorbents regularly.
- Post signs instructing customers not to overfill or top-off gas tanks.

Painting and Auto Repair:

- Clean work areas using dry methods.
- Use a shop vacuum or broom to sweep up dust, metal and debris.
- Consider investing in a sander with an attached vacuum system to capture dust at the source. Paint only in approved, enclosed areas equipped with vacuum hoods and filters.
- Minimize paint and thinner waste by carefully calculating needs based on surface area and by using the proper sprayer cup size.
- Clean spray guns in a self-contained unit and recycle or properly dispose of the cleaning solution.
- Prevent all washwater from entering the street, gutter or storm drain.

Cleaning Auto Parts:

- Scrape parts with a wire brush or use a bake oven rather than liquid cleaners.
- Situate drip pans, and catch areas so that fluids are directed into a fluid holding tank or sanitary sewer.
- Never wash parts or equipment in a parking lot, driveway or street, where rainwater can carry contaminants into the stormwater system.

Washing Vehicles:

- When possible, wash vehicles at a designated wash rack that is connected to the sanitary sewer, or take the vehicle to a professional car wash.
- As an alternative, wash vehicles where the wash water can be diverted to grass or gravel, and away from the street and possible storm drains.
- Always use soaps, cleaners and detergents that are labeled as phosphate free or biodegradable.

Metal Grinding and Polishing:

- Keep a bin under your lathe or grinder to capture metal filings.
- Store metal filings in a covered container, and send uncontaminated filings to a scrap metal recycler when finished.

Storing of Hazardous Waste:

- Contain cracked batteries to prevent hazardous spills.
- If possible, provide overhead coverage for all outside hazardous materials or waste storage areas. If overhead coverage is not available, cover stored materials with an impervious material prior to a rain event.
- Label waste containers and drums in accordance with all local, state and federal laws and regulations.
- Keep your liquid waste segregated and within a contained area.

Proper Disposal of Hazardous Waste:

- Recycle used motor oil and oil filters, anti-freeze and other automotive fluids.
- Batteries, tires and metal filings can be recycled as well.
- For more information regarding recycling or disposal of hazardous wastes, call the Thurston County HazoHouse at 360-786-5494.