Stormwater Management

An Overview for Auto Recyclers

Only Rain in the Drain

You work in the No.1 recycling industry in America:

>> Auto Recycling <<

Most auto dismantlers don't think of themselves as environmentalists, but the auto dismantling industry is very important for the environment.

Did you know that the automobile is the number one recycled product in America? Over 75% of the materials from cars are recycled. Recycled vehicles generate over 12 million tons of recycled steel, saving enough energy to power over 18 million homes for a full year. Your work makes a real difference to the environment.

On the other hand, if you handle wrecked cars or trucks without proper care, it can cause environmental damage. Fortunately, there are some commonsense measures you can take to protect the environment and the business where you work.

How can your work on wrecked vehicles damage the environment?

When it rains or snows, the flowing water can carry oils, antifreeze, and metals off your facility. These materials can end up in streams, rivers, lakes, and bays, killing aquatic life and seriously polluting water bodies in your area where people swim, fish, and boat.

It may be hard to see the connection between what happens at your facility and the effect on the environment. But polluted runoff is real. When polluted by oil, antifreeze, pesticides, animal waste, and a range of other materials, stormwater from business and residential property can add up to a big problem that affects entire communities.

What can YOU do?

You can follow these commonsense practices to do your part to prevent stormwater pollution. It's just a matter of changing a few habits and acting responsibly, all the time.

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If you follow this motto, you're well on your way toward successful stormwater management. Your goal should be to prevent oil, grease, antifreeze, and any other material from mixing with stormwater. Here's how:

1. Prevent spills and leaks.

Visually inspect vehicles entering the facility for leaks. If you see a leak, contain it with a drip pan or absorbent material (such as dry sweep or kitty litter) and clean up the residue from the ground.

When removing vehicle fluids, always use a drain pan, drain tables, or pump or suction system to capture the fluids.

2. Clean up spills immediately.

When spills and leaks happen, clean up as much of the fluid as you can, as quickly as possible. For small spills use shop rags, oil dry, or absorbent materials. For larger spills use absorbent socks, pads, and pillows.

Spill kits that include absorbent materials like oil dry and/or absorbent pads, socks, and pillows should be placed conveniently around the shop, and you should know where the kits are at all times. Keep brooms, shovels, or scoops near your spill kit.

Place used absorbents in a designated container for proper disposal. Check with your manager before putting used absorbent in a dumpster.

3. Handle fluids properly.

After you remove vehicle fluids, store the fluids in clearly marked containers. These containers should have some type of secondary containment (such as a larger drum or a concrete curb) to prevent a large spill from spreading. Make sure not to mix oils with antifreeze or solvents—that can create a hazardous waste, which can't be recycled and is expensive to get rid of. Also make sure to use the right size funnels when pouring fluids into a storage drum. Check the drums regularly for leaks.

4. Drain, cover, and contain all oily parts stored outside.

If you store oily parts outside or in vehicles that are outside, ensure they are covered to prevent contact with rain or snow. Inspect these areas regularly for spills and leaks.

Stick to these practices!

It is important to *always* implement these practices, and to pay special attention to these issues during wet weather.

Be proud of the work you do to protect the environment. What you do in the yard matters to your business and to your community. You can make a difference!