

Automotive Maintenance & Car Care



CAR MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS

Many common car maintenance routines contribute to environmental pollution. Washing the car or pouring used motor oil into a gutter or storm drain pollutes the environment. Water runoff from streets, parking lots and driveways picks up oil and grease dripped from cars, asbestos worn from brake linings, zinc from tires and organic compounds and metals from spilled fuels. These chemicals drain into waterways, harming aquatic life. Oil and grease, for example, clog fish gills and block oxygen from entering the water. If oxygen levels in the water become too low, aquatic animals die.

SOLUTIONS

- 1. Cleaning Work Sites.** Do not hose down your shop floor. It is best to sweep regularly. Use nontoxic cleaning products. Baking soda paste works well on battery heads, cable clamps and chrome; mix the soda with a mild, biodegradable dishwashing soap to clean wheels and tires; for windows, mix white vinegar or lemon juice with water.
- 2. Spills.** Prepare and use easy to find spill containment and cleanup kits. Include safety equipment and cleanup materials appropriate to the type and quantity of materials that could spill. Pour kitty litter, sawdust or cornmeal on spills.
- 3. Fluids.** Pollution Prevention Tip: To reduce or eliminate the generation of waste, fix sources of drips or leaks where possible. Routinely inspect the engine compartment, and regularly replace worn seals on equipment. Regular car maintenance prevents fluids from leaking onto streets and washing into storm drains. Change fluids carefully. Use a drip pan to avoid spills. Prevent fluid leaks from stored vehicles. Drain fluids such as unused gas, transmission and hydraulic oil, brake and radiator fluid from vehicles or parts kept in storage. Implement simple work practices to reduce the chance of spills. Use a funnel when pouring liquids (like lubricants or motor oil) and place a tray underneath to catch spills. Place drip pans under the spouts of liquid storage containers. Clean up spills immediately.
- 4. Washing Vehicles.** Prevent oil and grease, suspended solids and toxins from washing into storm drains. Designate a washing site where water drains to the sewer system. The area must be paved and well marked as a wash area. Post signs prohibiting oil changes and washing with solvents. Train all employees to use the designated area. Wash vehicles with biodegradable, phosphate-free detergent. Use a bucket (not a running hose) to wash and rinse vehicles. This conserves water and minimizes urban runoff.

