

When Cars Leak Fluids, Our Water Is Affected

How serious is an oil leak?

- It only takes one gallon of used motor oil to pollute a million gallons of fresh water. That's an entire year's supply of drinking water for 50 people.
- If you have to add a quart of oil a month to replace that which has leaked, in four months you will have left enough contamination on the ground to pollute a million gallons of fresh water.
- If your neighbor dumps his used oil down the drain after changing it himself, he has done the equivalent of ruining a year's supply of drinking water for 50 of your friends and relatives.

What is the problem?

- The current No. 1 water pollution problem comes from nonpoint source pollution.
- Nonpoint source pollution means the pollutants come from several sources instead on one discharge point.
- Nonpoint pollution occurs away from water ways; therefore, many people do not realize they are contributing to water pollution.
- Cars leak fluid such as oil or antifreeze on the pavement.
- Property owners do not follow directions and put too much fertilizer on their lawns.
- People wash their cars in their driveways or on the street.
- Pet owners do not pick up and properly dispose of their pets' waste.
- The rainwater will wash the pollutants into storm sewers.
- The pollution will be carried – untreated – to the nearest body of water.



What can I do?

- Check your car or truck for drips and oil leak regularly and fix them properly.
- Keep your vehicle tuned to reduce oil use.
- Use ground cloths or dip pans under your vehicle if you have leaks or are doing engine work.
- Clean up spills immediately (you can use kitty litter or sand to soak up the liquid) and properly dispose of cleanup materials.
- Collect all used oil in containers with tight-fitting lids, such as old plastic jugs.
- Do not mix waste oil with gasoline, solvents or other engine fluids. This contaminates the oil, which otherwise may be reused. Also, mixing may form a more hazardous chemical.
- Never dump motor oil, antifreeze, transmission fluid or other engine fluids into road gutters, down the storm drain or catch basin, on the ground or into a ditch.
- Recycle used motor oil. The electricity expended to retrieve one gallon of virgin oil from the ground is enough to run the average household for almost 24 hours.
- Many auto supply stores, car care centers and gas station will accept used oil and send it to an oil recycler free of charge.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on places you can take your used motor oil for recycling, contact your local service station or hazardous waste collection center.