Storm Water Management
Automotive Maintenance & Car Care

Car Maintenance Problems

Many common car maintenance routines contribute to storm water pollution.
Washing the car or pouring used motor oil into a gutter or storm drain pollutes our streams and water bodies.
Water runoff from streets, parking lots and driveways picks up oil and grease dripped from cars, asbestos worn from break linings, zinc from tires and organic compounds and metals from spilled fuels. These chemicals drain into water bodies, harming fish and 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

Best Management Practices such as handling, storing, and disposing of materials properly can prevent pollutants from entering the storm drains.

1. Cleaning Work Sites

Don't hose down your shop floor. It is best to sweep it regularly.

Use non-toxic cleaning products. Baking soda paste works well on battery heads, cable clamps, and chrome; mix soda with a mild, biodegradable dishwashing soap for 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.

For small spills, pour kitty litter, sawdust, or cornmeal on spills to bind liquids.

3. Fluids

Your customer's regular car maintenance prevents fluids from leaking onto streets and washing into storm drains. It also is good for business.

Change fluids carefully. Use a drip pan to avoid spills.

Prevent fluids 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 the car and conserve water.

5. Fueling Vehicles

Gas and diesel spills are common when fueling vehicles. To minimize pollution:

Design fuel areas so that all spills are contained, and runoff cannot carry spills into storm drains. Slope the containment area toward drains connected to the sewer system. Equip the drain with a shutoff valve in the event of a large spill.

Cover the fueling area to keep rain from washing away spilled materials. Extend the cover several feet beyond the containment area.

Keep absorbent materials on site to allow prompt cleanup of spills.

Post signs instructing people not to overfill gas tanks. Overfilling causes spills and vents gas fumes to the air.

6. Recycle. . .

Recycle what you can:

- Metal scraps
- Water-based paints
- Used tires
- Paper and cardboard
- Container glass, aluminum, and tin
- Used oils
- Antifreeze

Check the yellow pages under "Recycling" to locate a recycling facility for your particular product.

7. Employee and Customer Education

Educate your employees. Include water quality training in new-employee orientations and conduct annual review sessions.

Educate your customers. Raise both employee and customer awareness by stenciling storm drains near the work place.