

Did you ever stop to think where spilled motor oil and other automotive fluids go? If you're like most people, probably not. It's not the sort of thing that crosses our minds on a daily basis but perhaps it's time it did.

Each time it rains, many of these contaminants flow into the storm sewer and make their way to area waterways where they can have a negative impact on our water quality as well as fish and other wildlife.

Automotive fluids such as oil, grease, anti-freeze and brake fluid, as well as asbestos from worn brake linings, zinc from tires and other toxins pose a serious threat to our environment. Fortunately, their effect can be greatly minimized by simply practicing responsible habits when performing routine automotive maintenance.

So, the next time you're faced with performing routine auto-maintenance, try following these guidelines and help preserve our waterways.

Preventing and Handling Spills

Spills happen. It's a fact of life. But, you can reduce the possibility and the impact of spills by using a funnel or drip pan anytime you drain or add fluids to your vehicle. You can also prepare for the possibility of spills by keeping clean-up materials on hand such as kitty litter, sand or sawdust. Use these materials to soak up the fluid and thereby reduce the possibility of it being washed away with the rain.

It's also a good practice to drain fluids from stored vehicles such as project cars,

lawnmowers and seldom used recreational vehicles to prevent leaks that may occur while they are not in use.

Remember. Being prepared for a spill is the first step in prevention.

Take Care When Washing Vehicles

You've probably never thought of washing your car as a threat to the environment but it can be if not done properly.

When you wash your vehicle, soapsuds flow into the storm drain, which then sends the untreated water into nearby streams, creeks and other bodies of water. Even bio-degradable soap poses a problem due to the fact that as it degrades it robs oxygen from plants, fish and other wildlife.

In addition to the soapsuds, road grime and other fluids that are removed from your vehicle also flow into the storm drain and to area waterways.

For this reason, it's always best to wash your vehicle at a commercial car wash, which drains to the wastewater treatment plant.

On the other hand, if you rather enjoy washing your car on a warm summer day amid the more comfortable surroundings of your own yard, you can still reduce the likelihood of polluting our water supply by doing so in the grass rather than on the driveway. Grass and soil help filter out the toxins in soap and helps minimize the impact on the environment.

If possible, use phosphate-free soap, since phosphates can lead to an overgrowth

of algae in nearby waterways. Another alternative is to use a waterless soap and eliminate the mess entirely.

Lastly, when finished washing your vehicle, be sure to dispose of dirty, leftover water from your wash bucket in an interior drain where it will flow to the wastewater treatment plant rather than a nearby water source.

Additional Tips

- ◆ Repair any oil, gasoline, antifreeze, transmission fluid or other leaks as soon as they are discovered, before they become a problem.
- ◆ Keep your vehicle tuned and in good running condition. Properly maintained vehicles can help keep automotive waste from contaminating stormwater runoff.
- ◆ Avoid using engine degreasers, except at a commercial car wash.
- ◆ Locate a local auto service center or gas station willing to take your used motor oil, antifreeze and other automotive fluids but realize that some places do charge a small fee for this service. Never pour used auto fluids down the storm drain.
- ◆ When possible, utilize public transportation, carpool, walk or ride a bike and help reduce the impact of automotive pollution on our area waterways.

Collection Guidelines

Used motor oil and filters generated from "do-it-yourself" oil changes are collected from the curbside each garbage collection day. For a list of additional collection sites in Beaumont, visit www.earth911.org.

Please follow these guidelines to ensure that your used motor oil is collected and recycled:

- ◆ Drain used motor oil into clear plastic or opaque white containers with screw on caps
- ◆ Never mix oil with other fluids. Any substance other than used motor oil will contaminate the oil.
- ◆ Make sure the cap is screwed on tightly to prevent spillage.
- ◆ Place gallon jugs at the curb on your recycling collection day (place jugs approximately 3 feet from the recycling bin and/or small yard waste), OR
- ◆ Bring oil to one of the oil collection sites.
- ◆ Up to five (5) gallons of oil will be collected from each residence or from citizens bringing oil to collection sites.
- ◆ Empty used jugs will be returned.
- ◆ IN ADDITION, used oil filters will also be collected curbside and at the oil collection sites. Place oil filter in a plastic bag next to the oil for curbside collection or bring filter in a plastic bag to collection sites.



CITY OF BEAUMONT STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

For more information, contact:
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*A Guide to Responsible
Automotive Maintenance*

