



Auto Fluid Facts

What's the Problem With Auto Fluids?

Auto fluids like oil do not dissolve in water. They last a long time and stick to everything from sand to bird feathers. Oil and other petroleum products are toxic to people, wildlife and plants. One pint of oil can make a slick larger than a football field. Oil that leaks from our cars onto roads and driveways is washed into storm drains, and then usually flows directly into a lake or stream.

Facts and Figures

- Oil, antifreeze, and brake fluids contain heavy metals that can harm aquatic wildlife. The oil from just one oil change can pollute up to a million gallons of water!
- Used motor oil is the largest single source of oil pollution in our lakes, streams, and rivers. Americans spill 180 million gallons of used oil each year into our waters. This is 16 times the amount spilled by the Exxon Valdez in Alaska (the oil spill that killed at least half a million birds and other wildlife in 1989).
- If we refined the billion gallons of motor oil used every year in the United States, we would save 1.3 million barrels of oil per day, or half the daily output of the Alaskan Pipeline. According to the American Petroleum Institute, it takes 43 gallons of crude oil compared to just one gallon of used oil, to make 2.5 quarts of virgin lubricating oil.

What can YOU do?

How can you use auto fluids and help keep our waters clean?

- Stop drips. Check for oil leaks regularly and fix them promptly. Keep your car tuned to reduce oil use.
- Use ground cloths or drip pans beneath your vehicle if you have leaks or are doing engine work. Clean up spills immediately. Collect all used oil and other fluids in containers with tight fitting lids. Do not mix different engine fluids.
- Use cat litter to soak up leaked oil, which can then be thrown in the trash once dry.
- Never dispose of oil or other engine fluids down the storm drain, on the ground or into a ditch. Dumping automotive fluids into storm drains has the same result as dumping the materials directly into a waterbody.
- Recycle used motor oil and other car fluids. Many auto supply stores and gas stations will accept used oil.
- Buy recycled (re-refined) motor oil to use in your car.