

PROPER MANAGEMENT OF WASTES FROM AUTOMOTIVE RECYCLING OPERATIONS

Automotive recycling operations provide a valuable environmental service by recovering usable parts. Often referred to as salvage yards, these facilities are a major supplier of materials for the metals recycling industry. Housekeeping issues are the major source of complaints that result in local, municipal, and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) inspections. This fact sheet is provided to assist salvage yard operators in the proper handling, storage and management of wastes. A few simple actions can greatly improve housekeeping, protection of the environment, and community relations.

- Areas used for draining fluids, storing wastes and crushing vehicles should be paved and, if possible, protected from the weather.
- Spills and leaks must be cleaned up.
- Wastes must be recycled or disposed of properly.
- Wastes may not be discharged to the ground, septic system, storm sewer or surface water.

Automotive Fluids Handling

As part of salvage operations, all fluids should be drained, collected and properly managed.

The area used for draining and collecting fluids should be paved and protected from the weather.

- Fluids like diesel fuel, gasoline and windshield washer fluid should be reused or recycled.
- Other fluids such as brake fluid, crankcase oils, hydraulic fluid, power steering fluid and transmission fluid should be recycled. Used oil may also be burned in a space heater designed for use of used oil.
- Antifreeze should be recycled or properly disposed.

Any spills or leaks must be cleaned up.

- Spills or leaks should be cleaned up using an absorbent pad, sock or granular material.
- Recovered fluids can be squeezed from the absorbent for proper management, and the absorbent can be reused.
- Used absorbents should be managed as appropriate depending on the material cleaned up.

Wastes from salvage yards are regulated as residual or hazardous wastes.

- Wastes must be stored in Department of Transportation approved containers.
- Containers must be labeled and kept closed.
- Container storage areas should be paved, provided with spill containment and protected from the weather.
- Hazardous wastes must be shipped using appropriate paperwork and licensed transporters.
- Wastes must be shipped to facilities permitted to accept these wastes.
- Disposal of waste on the ground, underground or into surface waters is prohibited.
- Storage of waste for greater than one year is prohibited unless approved in writing by DEP.

Other Wastes

Salvage yards also manage other vehicle wastes such as air bags, batteries, fuel and oil filters, mercury switches, refrigerants, and tires.

- Undeployed air bags should be salvaged or deployed. Deployed air bags do not require any special handling.
- Lead acid batteries should be removed and stored for recycling. Any spills or leaks must be cleaned up promptly. Leaking batteries must be placed in an approved container. Disposal of lead acid batteries at landfills is prohibited.
- Fluid from fuel and oil filters should be collected and reused or recycled. Drained fuel and oil filters should be recycled.

- Mercury-containing switches from hood, trunk, and other convenience lighting systems should be removed and stored in an appropriate container for off-site reclamation. Anti-lock braking systems may also contain mercury switches. The National Vehicle Mercury Switch Recovery Program (NVMSRP) is a voluntary program in which many Pennsylvania automobile recyclers participate. For information on participating in the NVMSRP, visit the End of Life Vehicle Solutions (ELVS) website at www.elvsolutions.org. New federal regulations require that steel manufacturing facilities and iron and steel foundries that melt automobile scrap must ensure that the mercury-containing switches have been removed from the purchased scrap.
- A certified technician must recover refrigerants from air conditioners, dehumidifiers, freezers, and refrigerators. Recovered refrigerants must be reused, recycled, or properly disposed. Intentional venting of refrigerants is prohibited.
- Waste tires are a fire hazard and breeding ground for mosquitoes. Sites storing more than 500 tires in open storage or 1,500 in enclosed storage **must file a notification and comply** with DEP waste tire siting and storage requirements. Accumulating excess waste tires represents a financial liability.

Automobile Crushing

Automotive crushing operations should be performed with equipment designed to collect fluids that may drain from the crushed vehicle. The area used for crushing should be paved. Permanent crushing operations should be protected from the weather. Any fluids that spill or leak must be cleaned up.

Housekeeping

The operator should routinely inspect salvage yard operations, vehicle and waste storage areas, and crushing operations for evidence of spills and leaks. Spills and leaks must be cleaned up.

Good housekeeping includes minimizing dust, odors and oily runoff. Housekeeping also includes the appearance and quantity of wastes stored on-site.

Burning of Wastes

Open burning of wastes is prohibited.

Other Wastes/Issues

Metal containers, drums, gas cylinders, propane tanks, etc., must be empty. Salvage yards may not accept drums containing any type of waste material.

Stormwater Management

Salvaging areas, equipment, salvaged parts, and wastes should be protected from the weather. Spills of materials from salvage operations must be cleaned up.

Salvage yard operators are required to either submit a certification that operations are not exposed to stormwater, or obtain a stormwater permit. For additional information contact the local DEP office or visit www.dep.pa.gov, search term: stormwater.

Wastewater Management

Salvage yards may also generate wastewater from pressure-washing engine components. Pressure washing should be performed in an area designed to collect wastewater for discharge in accordance with local sewer requirements, or for off-site disposal.

Oily wastewater may not be discharged to the ground, septic system, storm sewer or surface water.

Further Information


For more information, visit www.dep.pa.gov, search terms: solid waste programs or stormwater, or contact the appropriate DEP program.

Hazardous Waste Program 717-787-6239

Municipal & Residual Waste Program 717-787-7381

Stormwater Management Program 717-787-6827

For free and confidential environmental assistance for small businesses, contact:

 Environmental Management Assistance Program at 877-ASK EMAP (877-275-3627) or visit their website at www.askemap.org.