

Description

Areas where vehicles are fueled, maintained, and stored/parked can be pollutant "hot spots" that can result in hydrocarbons, trace metals, and other pollutants being transported in stormwater runoff. Proper fueling operations, storage of automotive fluids and effective spill cleanup procedures can help reduce contamination of stormwater runoff from vehicle maintenance and fueling facilities.

Fuel-related spills can occur due to inattention during fueling or "topping off" fuel tanks. Common activities at commercial, industrial and municipal maintenance shops include parts cleaning, vehicle fluid replacement, and equipment replacement and repair. Some of the wastes generated at automobile maintenance facilities include solvents (degreasers, paint thinners, etc.), antifreeze, brake fluid and brake pad dust, battery acid, motor oil, fuel, and lubricating grease. Fleet storage areas and customer and employee parking can also be a source of vehicle-related contamination from leaks, antifreeze spills, etc.



Photograph VF-1. Use drip pans to collect leaks from vehicles until repairs can be completed. Photo courtesy of Tom Gore.

Appropriate Uses

These BMP guidelines are applicable to vehicle maintenance, fueling, fleet storage and parking facilities. Be aware that washing vehicles and equipment outdoors or in areas where wash water flows onto the ground can pollute stormwater. Vehicle wash water is considered process wastewater that should not be discharged to the storm sewer system. Consult state and federal discharge permit requirements for proper disposal of vehicle washwater, which is typically accomplished through discharge to the sanitary sewer system.

Practice Guidelines¹

Vehicle Maintenance

The most effective way to minimize wastes generated by automotive maintenance activities is to prevent their production in the first place. Consider adopting these practices:

- Perform maintenance activities inside or under cover. When repairs cannot be performed indoors, be sure to use drip pans or absorbents.
- Keep equipment clean and free of excessive oil and grease buildup.

¹ Guidelines adapted from the USEPA Menu of BMPs.

- Promptly cleanup spills using dry methods and properly dispose of waste. When water is required, use as little as possible to clean spills, leaks, and drips.
- Use a solvent collection service to collect spent solvent used for parts cleaning. Where practical, use detergent-based, steam cleaning, or pressure-based cleaning systems instead of organic solvent degreasers when practical. (Be aware that cleaning water discharged into the sanitary sewer may require pre-treatment prior to discharge.)
- When using liquids for cleaning, use a centralized station to ensure that solvents and residues stay in one area. Locate drip pans and draining boards to direct solvents back into a solvent sink or holding tank for reuse.
- Store used oil for recycling in labeled tanks. Locate used oil tanks and drums away from storm drains, flowing streams, and preferably indoors.
- Use non-hazardous or less hazardous alternatives when practical. For example, replace chlorinated organic solvents with non-chlorinated ones like kerosene or mineral spirits.
- Properly recycle or dispose of grease, oil, antifreeze, brake fluid, cleaning solutions, hydraulic fluid, batteries, transmission fluid, worn parts, filters, and rags.
- Drain and crush oil filters before recycling or disposal.
- Drain all fluids and remove batteries from salvage vehicles and equipment.
- Closely monitor parked vehicles for leaks and place pans under any leaks to collect the fluids for proper disposal or recycling.
- Install berms or other measures to contain spills and prevent work surface runoff from entering storm drains.
- Develop and follow a spill prevention plan. This includes a variety of measures such as spill kits and knowing where storm drains are located and how to protect them (e.g., drain mat, berm) when larger spills occur. (See the Spill Prevention, Containment and Control BMP for more information.)
- Conduct periodic employee training to reinforce proper disposal practices.
- Promptly transfer used fluids to recycling drums or hazardous waste containers.
- Store cracked batteries in leak-proof secondary containers.
- Inspect outdoor storage areas regularly for drips, spills and improperly stored materials (unlabeled containers, auto parts that might contain grease or fluids, etc.). This is particularly important for parking areas for vehicles awaiting repair.
- Structural stormwater BMPs in vehicle hotspot areas require routine cleanout of oil and grease, sometimes monthly or more frequently. During periods of heavy rainfall, cleanout is required more often to ensure that pollutants are not washed through the trap. Sediment removal is also required on a regular basis to keep the BMP working efficiently.

Vehicle Fueling

- Designated fueling areas should be designed to prevent stormwater runoff and spills. For example, fuel-dispensing areas should be paved with concrete or an equivalent impervious surface, with an adequate slope to prevent ponding, and separated from the rest of the site by a grade break or berm that prevents run-on of stormwater.
- Fuel dispensing areas should be covered. The cover's minimum dimensions must be equal to or greater than the area within the grade break or the fuel dispensing area so that the fueling area is completely covered. It may be necessary to install and maintain an oil capture device in catch basins that have the potential to receive runoff from the fueling area.
- For facilities where equipment is being fueled with a mobile fuel truck, establish a designated fueling area. Place temporary "caps" over nearby catch basins or manhole covers so that if a spill occurs, it is prevented from entering the storm drain. A form of secondary containment should be used when transferring fuel from the tank truck to the fuel tank. Storm drains in the vicinity should also be covered. Install vapor recovery nozzles to help control drips, as well as reduce air pollution.
- Keep spill response information and spill cleanup materials onsite and readily available.
- Fuel-dispensing areas should be inspected regularly and repair promptly completed. Inspectors should:
 - Check for external corrosion and structural failure in aboveground tanks.
 - Check for spills and overfills due to operator error.
 - Check for failure of any piping systems.
 - Check for leaks or spills during pumping of liquids or gases from a truck or rail car to a storage facility or vice versa.
 - Visually inspect new tank or container installations for loose fittings, poor welds, and improper or poorly fitted gaskets.
 - Inspect tank foundations, connections, coatings, tank walls, and piping systems. Look for corrosion, leaks, cracks, scratches, and other physical damage that may weaken the tank or container system.
- Aboveground and belowground tanks should be tested periodically for integrity by a qualified professional.
- Dry cleanup methods should be employed when cleaning up fuel-dispensing areas. Such methods include sweeping to remove litter and debris and using rags and absorbents for leaks and spills. Water should not be used to wash these areas. During routine cleaning, use a damp cloth on the pumps and a damp mop on the pavement, rather than spraying with a hose. Fuel dispensing nozzles should be fitted with "hold-open latches" (automatic shutoff) except where prohibited by local fire departments. Signs can be posted at the fuel dispenser or island warning vehicle owners/operators against "topping off" vehicle fuel tanks.
- Written procedures that describe these BMPs should be provided to employees who will be using fueling systems.