Oil Filters

How are spent oil filters regulated?
Used oil filters that are generated by businesses are regulated as hazardous waste unless they are managed according to the exemption for metal encased oil filters provided in section 7-203(o) of the Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Regulations (VHWMR). All household-generated wastes, including spent oil filters, are exempt from regulation as hazardous waste under VHWMR section 7-203(a).

What conditions must be met in order for oil filters to be exempt?
While the following conditions must be met in order for business-generated oil filters to be exempt from regulation as hazardous waste, business should also consider implementing the “best management practices” listed on the back of this fact sheet. The exemption requires that:

- The filters are not terne-plated. Terne is a lead/tin alloy that typically is used on filters for heavy duty vehicles. Terne-plated filters can be hazardous due to their lead content.
- The filters are drained using one of the following methods:
  - Puncturing the filter anti-drain back valve or the filter dome end and hot draining*;
  - Hot draining and dismantling
  - Any other equivalent hot draining method that will remove used oil; or
  - Draining and crushing using a mechanical, pneumatic, or hydraulic device designed for crushing oil filters

  *Hot draining means draining oil filters at temperatures near the operating temperature of an engine.
- The filters are not mixed with any hazardous waste (e.g., gasoline or oily absorbents).
- All drained oils are collected and managed in accordance with the VHWMR.

Where can I send exempt oil filters?
Although exempt oil filters, which in most cases are made of steel, can be disposed of as solid waste, the DEC strongly encourages businesses and households alike to recycle them as scrap metal. Check with local scrap yards or contact your solid waste district, planning commission, or municipality for information about recycling opportunities.
Best Management Practices for spent oil filters:

- Hot drain filters for at least 12 hours. Filters that immediately drip oil when picked up are not considered drained.

- Puncture the dome (top) of the filter, and drain it with the filter threads facing up. This method bypasses the check valves in the filter, ensuring that most of the oil is removed.

- Manage the oil drained from filters with other used oil.

- Store drained or crushed filters in a closed, leak proof container on an impervious surface.

- Recycle properly drained or crushed filters with scrap metals.

- Businesses that routinely generate large numbers of oil filters should consider purchasing an oil filter crusher. These devices compress oil filters into “pucks” allowing generators to fit more spent filters into shipping containers, while reducing recycling or disposal costs. If spent filters are being sent for recycling, contact the recycler prior to crushing since some recyclers do not accept crushed filters (e.g., recyclers that separate the metal from filtration media).

- If you crush filters, use a crushing area with an impervious surface.

For more information contact:

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