

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL FACT SHEET

Oily Wastes

What are oily wastes?

“Oily wastes” are wastes that contain petroleum-based oil(s) including but not limited to kerosene, fuel oil, hydraulic oil, lubricating oil, penetrating oil, tramp oil, quenching oil, crankcase oil, and automotive oil. The Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Regulations (VHWMR) require that generators of wastes containing greater than 5% by weight of petroleum-based oil (referred to as “petroleum distillates” in the regulations) manage them as hazardous waste identified by the VT02 hazardous waste code.

It is possible for waste to be contaminated with VT02 hazardous waste as well as other characteristic and/or listed hazardous wastes. Waste contaminated with gasoline is one example of a waste that may carry multiple hazardous waste codes including but not limited to VT02. Please note that this fact sheet provides an overview of waste contaminated with VT02 hazardous waste only.

The following materials are examples of wastes regulated as VT02 hazardous waste if they are spent and contain greater than 5% by weight of petroleum distillates:

- Absorbents like pads and booms;
- Clay-based, granular absorbent materials like “speedi dri” and kitty litter;
- Organic, granular absorbents like sawdust, corn cob, and peat-based materials;
- Floor sweepings;
- Sludge or grit from floor drain troughs;
- Oil-soaked dirt.

Are all oily wastes regulated as hazardous waste?

No. Only wastes that contain greater than 5% by weight petroleum distillates are regulated as VT02 hazardous waste. Several types of oily wastes are exempt from regulation as hazardous waste under the VHWMR as long as the waste-specific management conditions are met.

What oily wastes are conditionally exempt from regulation as hazardous waste?

The following wastes that contain greater than 5% by weight of petroleum distillates (and no other hazardous waste) are exempt from regulation as hazardous waste if the waste-specific management conditions are met:

- Household-generated wastes (VHWMR § 7-203(a)).
- Drained oil filters (§ 7-203(o)) – refer to our [Fact Sheet on Oil Filters](#).
- Petroleum-contaminated soil (§ 7-203(p)). This exemption is specifically intended for contaminated properties and includes many stringent conditions.

- Contaminated wipes to be sent off-site for cleaning and reuse (§ 7-203(w)) – refer to our [Fact Sheet on Contaminated Wipes](#).
- Reusable absorbent material (§ 7-203(x)).

How do I determine if my waste contains greater than 5% by weight of petroleum distillates?

For absorbents, the weight of the uncontaminated material can be compared with its weight after use to see if there has been an increase of greater than 5%. If so, the waste is most likely hazardous waste. However, be aware that dirt, water, and other non-petroleum contaminants may account for some of the increased weight.

For oil-contaminated liquids, dirt, or other debris, an environmental laboratory may be consulted to test for total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH). Generators should maintain a copy of the test results to support their determination. Note that this type of analytical testing does not have to be performed again unless the generator has reason to suspect that the composition of the waste has changed.

What if my waste contains less than 5% by weight of petroleum distillates?

Oily waste that contains equal to or less than 5% by weight of petroleum distillates can be disposed of as regular solid waste (i.e., thrown in the trash). Note that contaminated dirt or floor sweepings should never be spread outside and mixed with uncontaminated soils.

Wastewater that has picked up small amounts of oil must pass through an oil/water separator prior to discharge to a municipal wastewater treatment plant. Oily wastewater should never be discharged to an on-site septic system.

Can oil-soaked absorbent material be processed and reused onsite?

Yes. § 7-203(x) provides for the reuse of wring-able pads, booms, and other absorbent materials so long as they are processed and reused on site. If contaminated absorbents are stored prior to processing, containers must be:

- Marked with words that identify the contents (i.e., “oily absorbents for reuse”);
- Kept closed except to add or remove spent material;
- In good condition; and
- Located on an impervious surface, and if kept outside, within a structure that sheds rain and snow.

What about any oil that is recovered?

Free liquid oil that is recovered by the wringing of absorbent material, skimmed from an oil/water separator, or otherwise drained, separated, or removed from materials contaminated with oil, may be managed as “used oil” under Subchapter 8 of the VHWMR. Refer to the Fact Sheets on [Used Oil](#) and [Used Oil Burning](#) for additional information.

Can oily wastewater be evaporated?

After free oil has been removed, oily wastewater may be evaporated provided:

- It is non-hazardous, or it is hazardous waste *only* because it contains greater than 5% by weight of petroleum distillates;
- The facility has received approval per the Vermont Air Pollution Control Regulations to operate evaporation equipment; and
- Oily residue remaining after evaporation is managed either as used oil or as hazardous waste.

What are the best management practices related to oily wastes?

Implement a preventive maintenance program to minimize the generation of oily waste. Consider the following approaches:

- If it is necessary to use absorbent materials to clean up an oil spill, use reusable pads or booms whenever possible. If not possible to use reusable materials, use absorbent materials that have a high absorbency-to-weight ratio, and use them until they are saturated.
- Use drip pans, funnels, or drain trays to catch and transfer fluids to appropriate containers.
- Keep floors free of excess dirt to prevent the dirt from being contaminated.
- Avoid sweeping dirt or debris into floor drains, troughs, or basins.
- If a spill occurs, use squeegees or oil-only wet-vacuums to focus on areas where liquids collect. Collected oil can then be managed as used oil.
- Keep a small supply of absorbent material on-site to clean up residual oil that cannot be collected.

For more information regarding managing oily wastes, or if you have other hazardous waste management questions, please contact:

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