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How to Organize a Collection Event for Waste Oil

Introduction

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimated that two hundred million gallons of used oil have been disposed of improperly each year. In addition, there are approximately 400 million used oil filters generated in the United States annually. Each used oil filter can contain up to a quart of used oil.

Waste oil was banned from Nebraska landfills in 1994. Although waste oil generated by commercial sources has been recycled for years, recycling opportunities for agricultural operators and do-it-yourselfers remains limited throughout the state. An estimated 6.5 million gallons of waste oil is generated from Nebraska automobiles and light trucks each year, with an additional 5.3 million gallons generated by farm and ranch operations in Nebraska.

The mismanagement of waste oil is a serious environmental problem. The National Petroleum Association estimates every person nationally generates 4.43 gallons of vehicle oil each year. Waste oil which is improperly disposed in sewers disrupts local treatment plants and in some cases drains directly into streams or rivers. Waste oil deposited on the ground can contaminate soil and water sources.

Many communities in Nebraska, particularly in rural areas, have few options available to properly dispose of waste oil. A one-day collection event provides a relatively simple and economical way to recycle potentially harmful waste oil in locations where permanent waste oil collection opportunities do not exist. This guidance document, "How to Organize a Collection Event for Waste Oil," includes information needed to organize and conduct a successful waste oil and oil filter collection day. If promoted effectively, hundreds or even thousands of gallons of waste oil can be collected and recycled in an environmentally responsible manner in a single collection day.

The Nebraska Waste Oil Recycling Project and the development of this document are joint efforts of the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (now known as the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment, or DWEE), University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Keep Nebraska Beautiful, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Department of Administrative Services, and the Nebraska State Recycling Association.

Waste Oil in Nebraska

In 1996, a Rural Nebraska Waste Oil Pilot Study was conducted in Gage County. During the study, 253 Gage County farms were surveyed to determine waste oil disposal practices. The majority of respondents indicated they believe disposal of waste oil is a problem because they "can't get rid of it." Seventy-six percent of the respondents reported that they would likely use a waste oil disposal system

if an easier method were made available. Similarly, a 1996 study released by the American Petroleum Institute indicated that a lack of convenience and public education were two critical barriers preventing do-it-yourselfers from recycling waste oil.

Mail and telephone surveys were used to conduct the 1996 Rural Nebraska Waste Oil Pilot Study in Gage County. These surveys had a response rate of thirty-two percent. The average survey respondent had a farm operation consisting of 754 acres and had 38 gallons of waste oil in storage. Bulk suppliers picked up waste oil at only five percent of the farms.

The Gage County study indicated that respondents who are familiar with waste oil disposal options are ten times more likely to recycle their oil. If given the opportunity, many Nebraska farmers and do-it-yourselfers will both welcome and take advantage of a local waste oil recycling effort such as the collection event discussed in this document. Once a properly promoted collection program is implemented in a community, farmers and do-it-yourselfers will be able to store their waste oil until the next collection event is held.

Collection Events Participants

The four main participants involved in organizing and conducting a collection event for waste oil include the following:

The Project Coordinator and Volunteers: These persons are the key ingredient to a successful effort. The Project Coordinator initiates, organizes, promotes, and is the principal contact for the collection day event. The Project Coordinator will identify and work with an appropriate collection site host and oil recycling business to be used at the collection. Examples of potential project coordinators include County Extension educators, Keep America Beautiful program coordinators, natural resource district information/education coordinators, community leaders, or any other willing environmental outreach program or person(s).

Volunteers are essential in assisting the Project Coordinator in many of the tasks leading up to the collection event, during the collection, and cleanup. Examples of volunteers could include municipal and county staff, educators and students, Future Farmers of America chapters, and representatives of the business community.

The Collection Site Host: Locating an appropriate site for a waste oil collection is an important step in assuring a safe, smooth, and successful collection day event. The collection site should allow for adequate and safe traffic flow during peak collection times. Potential collection site hosts include local farmer Co-op's, discount stores, recycling centers, community landfill sites or transfer stations, county fairgrounds, community parking lots, or any other sites suitable for hosting a waste oil collection.

The Oil Recycling Business: It is the Project Coordinator's responsibility to choose a business that is reputable, licensed, and has a good environmental track record. Most oil recycling businesses use trucks equipped with tanks to store waste oil brought to the collection site. Many businesses also use "sniffer" equipment to test each container of waste oil for possible contaminants. You may also want to check to see if the business has the ability to accept contaminated waste oil.

The Participating Public: The most important participant in a waste oil collection event is the public. Whether they are farmers, ranchers, or do-it-yourselfers, participants should be encouraged and commended for their decision to dispose of their waste oil in an environmentally responsible manner. The waste oil collection should be a convenient and friendly event for the participating public.

Planning a Collection Event

- Find a site which is suitable for a waste oil collection event. The site should be a well-known location which is centrally located, easily accessed (near a major artery or highway), and is properly zoned. Sites should avoid parks, residences, storm water drains, and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Evaluate the site setup to determine if it: 1) will accommodate a waste oil disposal program; 2) has an impermeable surface; 3) has on site utilities available (running water, fire hydrant, electrical hookups); 4) has exit options provided; and 5) is solely owned to ensure this will be the only activity taking place. You will also need to determine liability (review and understand insurance policies of the program sponsor, land owner, and contractor).
- The Project Coordinator will set up the collection day with the collection site host. Consider holding the collection in conjunction with a local promotion or special event (Farmer Appreciation Day, Nebraska Recycles Day, County Fairs, Harvest Time Festival, Earth Day, etc.).
- Allow six to eight weeks lead time to plan the collection event. The collection can last from four to eight hours, depending on the anticipated community response and special events coinciding with the collection.
- Determine the role and cost of a contractor in the collection and disposal of waste oil. Once the role is determined, interview and select a contractor.
- Determine site design and basic operation requirements. Designate areas (use banners or signs) indicating the entrance, parking, waste oil drop-off site, safety station, emergency routes, and a clearly defined exit.
- Determine if quantities accepted should be limited. If so, a waste oil collection run may need to be scheduled for collection from those persons with large quantities of waste oil.
- Assess the financial resources required for holding a waste oil collection event. Waste oil recycling days should have minimal costs involved. There may be some expenses in preparing the collection site, and operational costs.
- Collection event coordinators should prepare a press kit. The press kit would contain a list of contacts and experts to answer any questions, press releases for the waste oil collection event, two to three feature articles, photos, and press ready ads to publicize the collection event.
- Staffing of the collection site is crucial to the success of the event. Volunteers will be needed to assist in publicizing the event, answering pre-event questions, preparing the site, directing traffic, assisting in disposal, surveying participants, and cleaning up the site.
- Alert local officials such as law enforcement and fire departments.
- All volunteers should attend a training session. This session should inform volunteers of operating procedures, emergency plans, and scheduling of shifts.
- Make final considerations for such things as weather (have a tent available), utility hookups for electricity and water, and site cleanup at the end of the event.

Planning Considerations for Holding a Collection Event

- Select and evaluate a collection site
- Select and hire a contractor
- Assess financial resources
- Determine the date of collection
- Select and train volunteers
- Design site and determine operational requirements
- Prepare a press kit
- Final preparations
- Hold collection event
- Clean up site after collection

Promoting a Collection Event

- Determine who most likely has waste oil and the best available ways to reach this audience.
- What message do you want to promote?
 - What is waste oil?
 - How does waste oil contribute to pollution?
 - How do you use the collection event services?
 - How do you properly store waste oil?
- Distribute promotional flyers and other printed materials. These materials can be placed in monthly Co-op statements, community utility bills, and newspaper ads. They can also be used for public service announcements (PSAs) and posters.
- Other collection event promotion opportunities include: private pesticide applicator training courses coordinated by individual County Extension offices; county fairs; newsletters; Extension newsletters; Husker Harvest Days; radio call-in programs; flyers accompanying billing statements; gas pump toppers; posters in appropriate store windows; local media PSAs (radio, television, newspaper).
- Promotional materials used prior to the collection event should stress that only waste oil will be accepted at the collection, and the oil recycling contractor will use “sniffer” equipment to test all oil for contaminants.
- Develop educational flyers and promotional materials to distribute to customers.

NOTE: This document contains the following sample media news release.

Collection Event Procedures

Prior to Customers Arriving

- Place collection truck in a highly visible location.
- Use traffic cones to direct traffic and allow for plenty of room to safely line up vehicles and people waiting to dispose of their oil. The traffic pattern should allow for good traffic flow and minimize safety problems.
- Place a tarp on the ground where oil is transferred into the truck to prevent possible contamination should spillage occur.
- Post signs explaining the procedures, and make sure customers understand the importance of keeping other fluids and contaminants such as chlorine, solvents, antifreeze, brake fluid, etc., separate from the waste oil. A few ounces of these hazardous substances can contaminate a 500-gallon tank of waste oil, resulting in expensive disposal costs.
- Place “NO SMOKING” signs on-site. Waste oil is ignitable.
- Have spill kits available on site including an oil absorbent material in case of accidental spillage. A spill kit may include:
 - Absorbent;
 - Clean rags;
 - Drip trays;
 - Plastic bags for leaking containers (various sizes); and
 - Plastic for walls and floor coverings.
- Check to make sure there are clean, empty drums to consolidate small quantities of oil brought in by individuals in quart, gallon, or 2.5 gallon containers and funnels to prevent spillage when pouring small quantities into the drums.

Customers Arrive

- Have customers sign-in (example on next page). This discourages attempts to dispose of contaminated oil. Each participant must register the amount of waste oil deposited.
- To meet federal regulations, as well as for your own protection, have participants sign the "Residential/ Farm Source Verification" form which says that the waste oil brought in by an individual "do-it-yourselfer" is from a personal vehicle, or waste oil is generated from the maintenance of vehicles or machinery operated on a farm at an average of 25 gallons per month or less in a calendar year.
- Query the person disposing of the waste oil. Does the container hold anything other than waste oil? Contaminants such as carburetor cleaners, gasoline, solvents, thinners, paints, varnishes, pesticides, and antifreeze are not acceptable.
- Visually examine the oil. Look for water, paint chips, or any other signs of contamination.
- Be sure oil recycling business personnel or other trained staff, not customers; pour the used oil into the collection tank. The tank should be staffed at all times during the collection.
- Keep a record of how many gallons are collected. Keeping track of how many gallons are brought in by farmers and how many from "do-it-yourselfers" will identify where the most need is for future collection events, and can help to effectively plan and promote these events.
- Return the customer's oil container, or offer to dispose of it properly.
- Thank the customers for taking the time to recycle their waste oil in an environmentally sound manner.

Spill Notification

1. Immediate notification is required regardless of the quantity of oil released which occurs beneath the surface of the land, or impacts or threatens waters of the state, or threatens the public health and welfare.
2. Immediate notification is required of a release upon the surface of the land (any natural or man-made surfaces of the earth, excluding water) of an oil spill in any quantity that exceeds 25 gallons.

If either of these two scenarios occurs during a collection event, contact the DWEE during normal work hours at 402-471-2186. For spills which occur after hours or on weekends and holidays notify the Nebraska State Patrol at 402-471-4545.

Sample News Release:

For Immediate Release

Waste Oil Collection Drive News Release

For more information, contact:
(your name)
(phone number)

(Sponsor Name) HOLDS WASTE OIL COLLECTION DRIVE

(Insert Date, Time)-- The **(Sponsors Name)** will hold a Waste Oil Collection Drive on **(Day/Date)** at **(Exact Location)**. The drive will take place from __:__ to __:__ and offers the community an easy, environmentally friendly way to dispose of waste oil [for a nominal collection fee]. [This fee will be reimbursed through price-off coupons on a new Farmland oil purchase].

“This waste oil collection event is designed to meet a growing problem: how to properly dispose of waste oil collected on the farm/ranch and for do-it-yourselfers,” says **(sponsor representative)** . [“The program’s second feature is the coupon. It offers a way to save more than the environment.”]

Waste oil should be brought to the collection site in any sized, sealed, closed containers. Waste oil will be converted to a useable form by a waste oil recycler, whose mission is to recover the waste oil generated in this country every year. Waste oil can be recycled into oil components and other products for future use. The land is our most valuable resource. Recycle to show you care.

Sample Public Service Announcement:

Waste Oil Collection Event

This PSA is designed to generate public awareness for oil recycling and cannot mention specific Proprietorships by name.

Deliver to local radio station at least 2 weeks before event, or even if you do not hold the event.

30-second Public Service Announcement:

“An estimated 6.5 million gallons of waste oil is generated from Nebraska automobiles and light trucks each year, with an additional 5.3 million gallons generated by farm and ranch operations in Nebraska. This waste oil could end up in our landfills or cause environmental damage that could last for generations.

Please dispose of your waste oil properly, through the upcoming collection event to be held (date, time, location). Our land is our most valuable resource Recycle to show you care.”

RESOURCES:

- DWEE Home Page <https://dwee.nebraska.gov/>

Contacts:

- DWEE Main Number (402) 471-2186
- DWEE Toll Free Number (877) 253-2603
- DWEE Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistant (402) 471-8308
- Email questions to: DWEE.moreinfo@nebraska.gov

DWEE Publications:

- [Title 128 – Nebraska Hazardous Waste Regulations](#)
- [Title 132 – Nebraska Integrated Solid Waste Management Regulations](#)
Titles are available on the DWEE website by clicking “Visit Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (DEE),” selecting “Resources and Services,” “Laws & Regulations,” and “Rules & Regulations.”