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Used Antifreeze Factsheet

Why is Used Antifreeze a Concern?

Antifreeze is used as an engine coolant and contains ethylene glycol or propylene glycol. Ethylene glycol is very toxic and attractive to small children and animals due to its sweet taste. Propylene glycol is less toxic and has a bitter taste. Both of these products are often lime green in color. Improper disposal or management of used antifreeze can damage aquatic organisms, cause overloading of wastewater treatment systems and contaminate groundwater.

During use, antifreeze can become contaminated with grit, traces of fuel and heavy metals from the engine. Contaminants such as benzene and lead may be high enough that used antifreeze will be a characteristic hazardous waste by exceeding the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP) thresholds set for these constituents.

How Do I Manage Used Antifreeze?



How Is Used Antifreeze Regulated?

Used antifreeze that is generated by businesses, institutions or public agencies is subject to applicable state and federal hazardous waste management requirements. Under these requirements generators must determine if their wastes are hazardous. If used antifreeze is determined to be hazardous, it must be managed according to applicable hazardous waste requirements. Management of used antifreeze produced by household "Do-It-Yourselfers" is not subject to these management requirements, and is discussed at the end of this factsheet.

Oregon's Antifreeze Policy

The Department of Environmental Quality has found, based on available analytical data, used antifreeze that is recycled and properly managed according to the following "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) generally will not exhibit hazardous waste characteristics. Also, used antifreeze that is managed according to the following BMPs and recycled will be presumed to be managed in accordance with state hazardous waste regulations.