Why keep a dry shop?

The history of wastewater regulations is clear: discharge limits will continue to become more stringent. Minimize the impact of these regulations on your shop by adopting a dry shop goal. A dry shop is a shop that has sealed all its floor drains.

Although a 100-percent "dry shop" may not be feasible in your area due to melting snow and ice, the methods and equipment presented in this fact sheet will help you reduce floor wash water volume and contamination. This, in turn, reduces your liabilities, protects the environment and community, and even saves you time and money spent cleaning floors.

The effects of flushing wash water down storm drains

Water flows untreated from storm drains directly to creeks, streams, lakes, bays, and oceans. If this water is contaminated, it can harm aquatic life; even soapy water can upset aquatic ecosystems. The Clean Water Act makes it illegal to discharge pollutants to surface waters; violators can face imprisonment and fines of up to $25,000 per day! Storm drain connections to indoor drains or sinks are prohibited in most areas. Storm drains are usually located outside a shop. If you are unsure about the nature of your shop drains, ask the building manager or local sewer authority whether any of the drains are connected to storm water sewers.
Keeping your shop clean and safe

Always “Stop if there’s a drop!”

Use absorbents wisely

- Keep these absorbent devices on-hand to prevent very large spills from spreading.
- After use, wring out the absorbed fluid into the proper drum for recycling or disposal, and reuse the absorbents.
- Spent absorbent devices must be disposed of properly. This involves determining whether the spent absorbent is a hazardous waste.

Floor sweep (grease sweep, “kitty litter,” rice hull, etc.)

- These absorbents should be used only when the spill can not be cleaned with shop rags or dedicated mops (see next page).
- Restrict the use of these absorbents to cleaning up gasoline, solvent, or other hazardous waste chemical spills. Manage these contaminated absorbents as hazardous waste.
- Use floor sweep until it no longer absorbs fluids. Recycle used floor sweep if possible, or dispose as hazardous waste. Floor sweep can be processed to reclaim and recycle absorbed compounds. Ask your vendor about recycling opportunities for spent floor sweep.

HYDROPHOBIC MOPS

Hydrophobic mops absorb only oil, not water or anti-freeze. They are available from the following vendors:

CCP in Cleveland, OH (800) 321-1050
Iny-Tec Environmental in Walnut Creek, CA (800) 336-4699

These vendors provided information for this fact sheet. This list is not complete; other vendors may provide similar or identical products and services.

Consider sealing your shop floor

Sealing your shop floor with epoxy or other suitable sealant can be expensive (typical cost for epoxy sealing is $1.50 to $2.00 per square foot), but there are several benefits. An epoxy-sealed floor:

- Won’t absorb spills as a concrete floor does.
- Makes spill cleanup easier. (You can squeeze small spills into a dustpan and pour liquid into appropriate drum.)
- Requires less time and water to clean.
- Lasts for years and reduces long-term liability for cleanup of a contaminated shop floor and soil below.
- Looks great to customers and workers alike.

customer perception and employee morale

“Cleaning up spills when they occur saves us time and money and keeps the shop looking clean, which my customers and workers both appreciate.”

—Larry Moore
Larry’s Autoworks
Mountain View, California
The 4-Step Floor Cleanup Method

1. If oil is present, mop it up first.
   - Use a hydrophobic mop only.
   - Restrict back-and-forth movement of mop to avoid spreading spill.
   - Transfer to used oil drum for recycling.

2. If antifreeze is present, mop it up now.
   - Use a dedicated cloth mop only.
   - Transfer to waste coolant drum for recycling.

3. Use rags to dry surface.
   - Clean with rags until floor is dry.
   - Do not saturate.
   - Send rags to an industrial laundry or properly dispose.

4. Use a wet mop only if necessary for final cleaning.
   - Use a mild, non-caustic detergent.
   - Dump wash water down a sink or toilet (but check with the local sewage agency first).

If your spill is gasoline or solvent?
- Yes: Use absorbent and dispose as hazardous waste.
- No: Clean with shop rags until floor is dry. Do not saturate rags.

Can your spill be cleaned up with three or fewer rags?
- Yes: Clean with shop rags until floor is dry. Do not saturate rags.
- No: Use absorbent and dispose as hazardous waste.
Spill prevention equipment

Water troughs for secondary containment of used oil and waste antifreeze (available from your local feed store)

- These are the same inexpensive troughs that are used for livestock. Fluids can be pumped out for use or recycling.
- Clearly mark all stored materials.
- Inspect troughs daily for leaks.
- Keep troughs clean and dry.

Funnel drum covers

Funnel drum covers are available from Hy-Tec Environmental at (800) 336-4499, Spill Cleanup Direct at (800) 356-0783, and Todd Automotive at (800) 467-2750. (These vendors provided information for this fact sheet. This list is not complete: other vendors may provide similar or identical products and services.)

- These items minimize spills when transferring liquids from one container to another.
- They also can be used to drain oil filters.

Bulk, pressurized, overhead fluid delivery (available from all major motor oil manufacturers)

- Used for oil changes and lube jobs to reduce spills.
- Allows these jobs to be done more quickly.
- The equipment is often provided by the oil manufacturer at no charge.

You can make a difference!

A shop owner or manager must send a clear message to technicians about how clean the shop should be kept and how spills should be prevented and cleaned up. It’s your responsibility to make proper spill prevention and floor cleaning top priorities for every technician.

Your state or local government environmental agency has more information about compliance and pollution prevention for auto repair shops and fleet maintenance operations in your state or area. Additional fact sheets and information can be found at www.epa.gov/region09/p2/autofleet.

This fact sheet is part of a package of fact sheets entitled either “The Pollution Prevention Tool Kit, Best Environmental Practices for Auto Repair” (publication number EPA-909-E-99-001) or “The Pollution Prevention Tool Kit, Best Environmental Practices for Fleet Maintenance” (publication number EPA-909-E-99-002). To obtain copies of either package, call (800) 490-9198. Accompanying videos, “Profit Through Prevention”, are available at the same phone number for either auto repair (number EPA-909-V-99-001) or fleet maintenance (number EPA-909-V-99-002).