NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Services

BMPs

Best Management Practices for Motor Vehicle Recyclers

Vehicle Fuel Tanks & Filters

Improperly handled fuel tanks and filters from motor vehicles pose a risk to human health, safety, and the environment. Understanding these risks is important to understanding the proper handling techniques.

Used fuel tanks and filters that contain even very small amounts of fuel are a potential source of soil, groundwater, and surface water contamination. Therefore, it is very important to remove, drain, store, and dispose of vehicle fuel tanks and filters in a manner that prevents fuel from spilling or leaking onto the ground.

Used fuel tanks also can present a risk of explosion or fire. It is therefore very important to handle fuel tanks away from ignition sources, including sparks from welding equipment, heating devices and static electricity.

Did You Know?

- Many newer vehicles are equipped with plastic, not steel, fuel tanks. This presents new recycling challenges for the motor vehicle recycling industry.
- N.H. public health officials consider it unsafe to drink water contaminated with the gasoline additive, MtBE, in concentrations exceeding 13 parts per billion. One part per billion is the equivalent of one drop of MtBE from an eyedropper in a railroad tanker truck full of water.
- According to Shell-Canada, the vapors from one cup of gasoline have the explosive force of five sticks of dynamite.

Best Management Practices for Vehicle Fuel Tanks & Filters

- Remove fuel from vehicle fuel tanks as soon as possible after vehicles arrive at the facility. Do this before you remove the tank from the vehicle.
- If a small amount of fuel remains in the tank after it is removed from the vehicle, carefully pour it into an approved fuel storage container. Use funnels and drip pans to avoid spills.
- Remove the in-tank fuel pump and wires.
- Allow empty fuel tanks to fully ventilate before crushing them, in order to reduce the potential for explosion.
- Store fuel tanks on a curbed intact impervious surface, such as concrete. Do not store fuel tanks on the ground.
- Store fuel tanks at least 50 feet from catch basins, storm drains, and surface waters, and at least 75 feet from private wells, and outside the protective radius of a public well (typically 150 - 400 feet.)

- Store fuel tanks in a well ventilated area that is protected from rainfall.
- Do not store un-drained fuel tanks. They are a fire and explosion hazard, and can leak.
- Do not crush a vehicle if the fuel tank is still attached.
- Have the fuel tank scrap pile removed on a regular basis. Do not store fuel tanks for very long periods of time.
- Drain excess fuel from filters into a proper fuel container. Allow the filter to drain at least 24 hours.
- Store drained fuel filters separately in a fireproof container marked “Used Fuel Filters.”
- Metal fuel filters that are ***completely drained*** and ***dry*** can be recycled with other scrap metals.

This guide sheet provides general guidance only.

For additional information, contact:

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