

If your day-to-day activities involve the collection and storage of used vehicle parts and old vehicle batteries, you should consider the effects your activity may have on the environment.

## What causes pollution?

Poor work practices at your site in relation to mechanical parts such as differentials, gearboxes and car batteries may be causing some of these common problems:

- Oil stained concrete or earth around work areas
- A messy storage area where fluid leaks and spills have occurred while parts have been left stacked in the yard
- An oily sheen visible on rainwater run-off from areas used to store parts contaminating stormwater sumps
- Old and broken batteries stacked in the open so that acid can leak out of them into the ground.

## How your waste can pollute the environment

Any material or substance left uncovered or on the ground outside can flow or be washed by rainwater into a nearby stormwater drain where it will result in the pollution of the local stream or the coast.

Oil can partially dissolve in water introducing toxic substances into the environment. These include heavy metals such as lead and chromium and hydrocarbon compounds that are a by-product of vehicle operation.

If discharged, these substances can cause harm to the environment by:

- Allowing oil and lead from leaking batteries to seep into the land and underlying groundwater
- Poisoning animals and plants
- Forming an oily layer or film on surface water and preventing oxygen and sunlight from entering the water, making it difficult for animals to breathe and find food and for plants to get energy
- Building up chemicals in the bodies of plants and animals potentially causing long-term health effects.

Even a very small quantity of a pollutant, or just one accidental discharge can drastically alter the quality of a stream. Fish, insects and plant life can be killed and their habitats destroyed. The stream can take many years to recover.

You may think that your little bit of waste can't harm the environment but there are many other people in the region carrying out activities similar to yours. Your



Photo 1: Many parts removed from old vehicles can potentially affect the environment

waste when combined with that of many others can amount to a significant amount of pollution occurring every day of the year. The cumulative effects of combined discharges can cause serious damage to our environment and must be prevented.

## It is illegal to cause pollution

In New Zealand, the Resource Management Act (1991) is the law that protects our environment. It clearly states that every person is responsible for ensuring that their activities and those of their employees do not contribute to pollution of the environment.

Specifically, it is illegal to allow any substance to enter water either directly, through the stormwater system or via the contamination of land unless a resource consent has been issued for this discharge.

Also, in Taranaki it is illegal to burn tyres, untreated waste oil, coated metal cable, motor vehicles or parts of them, unless a special incinerator is used.

By making a few simple changes to your site and daily practices you will be contributing to a pollution free environment for us all to enjoy both now and in the future.

## **Play it safe – stop pollution from your activities**

- Clean parts of your yard that are dirty and oily

- Remove all soil and gravel that is visibly contaminated with oil to a commercial waste contractor for treatment and/or disposal
- If possible store all parts and batteries under cover on a paved or sealed surface
- Always drain all fluids from all parts and dispose of them properly
- Store all waste oil and other liquids in a covered bunded area. If possible designate a reliable staff member to drain off the clean stormwater that accumulates in the bunded area
- If oil must be stored outside, keep lids and caps on containers, ensure containers are robust and use a secure area to avoid vandalism
- Store acid carefully in sealed, corrosion proof containers and regularly dispose of it via a commercial waste contractor
- Clean up all spilt material immediately and dispose of waste into a bin, ensuring that it won't leak out
- Never burn parts or wastes from vehicles.

**Always have a good spill contingency plan. Keep pollution control equipment handy and make sure your staff members are well trained.**

**Batteries and waste oil can be recycled – contact the Taranaki Regional Council's Waste Minimisation Officer for further details.**

**For further advice or information contact:  
Taranaki Regional Council, Private Bag 713  
Stratford  
Ph: 06 765 7127      Fax: 06 765 5097  
Pollution Hotline: 0800 736 222  
[www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz)**



Photo 2: Fluids should be drained from old parts and correctly disposed of