
POLLUTION PREVENTION

Car Tips

P2 Car Tip Your Antifreeze, Please

Used antifreeze is often poured down the drain or on the ground. Yet one of its components, ethylene glycol, is poisonous to children and pets, who are attracted by its sweet taste. Ethylene glycol can also contaminate groundwater. Although antifreeze can be re-distilled, not many companies are doing it yet. If you drain your own antifreeze, put it into a clean, tightly sealed container. Try to find a service station or hazardous waste facility that will store it for periodic recycling (there may be a charge). As a last resort, flush it down your drain with plenty of water – but only if your home is connected to a municipal sewage system; antifreeze can overwhelm a home septic tank. If a service station drains your radiator, make sure they plan to arrange for recycling or proper disposal.

Car Tip Get the Lead Out

Classified by EPA as a hazardous substance, lead can cause brain damage, particularly in fetuses and pre-school children. More than 70% of the lead now used in the U.S. is found in automobile batteries (about half of the battery's weight – an average of 19 pounds – is lead). Battery recycling has been well-established for years, but at least 10% of used batteries still end up stored in garages, dumped in the open or incinerated. Take your used battery back where you bought it. Service stations and retail stores that sell batteries often take them back (in today's scrap market they are worth about \$2 each). Some retail chains have been offering rebates on used batteries for years. When you buy a new one, read the fine print; you may have some money coming. Also, look for batteries with black plastic casings, the ones most likely to be made from recycled plastic.

P2 Car Tip Tires to Spare

Every year, 240 million tires are scrapped in the U.S., adding to the estimated two to three billion now littering the landscape. Tire dumps are ideal breeding grounds for rats and mosquitoes and are fire hazards (burning, they release toxic chemicals into the air and produce an oil-like residue that can contaminate groundwater). Today's tires are chemically complex but highly recyclable. Besides retreads, which reuse 38 million tire casings annually, scrap tires are recycled into a variety of products – from tug boat fenders to rubber paving. Still only about 27% of waste tires are reused or recycled. The main problem is economic. Processing costs more than dumping. When buying new tires, choose long life models. Follow proper inflation, balancing and rotation practices and keep your car's front end in alignment to extend the life of your tires. (You'll also save gas; low tire pressure alone wastes over two million gallons of gasoline in the U.S. every day .)

P2 Car Tip Unspoiled Oil

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that 120 million gallons of used motor oil are thrown away each year in the U.S. by do-it-yourselfers. Most of this oil (roughly equivalent to 11 Exxon Valdez oil spills) is dumped on the ground or into sewers or put into containers and placed in the trash. Used oil contains dangerous chemicals and heavy metals, and the amount from a single oil change can permanently ruin a million gallons of fresh water. And oil is a natural for recycling. Although some is burned as fuel oil, it can also be efficiently re-refined into valuable high-grade lubricating oil.