

Subject: Can Oil-Soaked Rags Be Managed under Used Oil Regulations?

To All:

FYI - From Lion Technologies weekly eNews at www.lion.com. In addition to the option below, most state policies on used shop towels allow them to be laundered and returned without being considered a hazardous or other regulated waste. While each state policy can be different, the basic requirements are that the towels cannot be saturated with oil, the need to be collected in closed containers, and a contract exists between the printer and the laundry. Some states required that the container used to collect the used towels be labeled, but even if not required, labeling the container is a good practice.

Gary

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Q. Our facility generates used oil from our machinery during our preventative maintenance program. This process also produces rags that are contaminated with oil. Neither material would meet the definition of hazardous waste. Our used oils have a good BTU and we would like to burn them on site. Our rags can also be burned on site. Can we manage these materials under the used oil rules? Are there any special conditions we must consider?

A. EPA defines used oil as, "any oil that has been refined from crude oil, or synthetic oil, that has been used and as a result of such use has been contaminated with physical or chemical impurities" [40 CFR 279.1]. It would appear that the oil collected from your preventative maintenance program would meet this definition. The used oil rules presume that your used oil will be recycled, which includes burning as a fuel, and may therefore be managed under the used oil rules at 40 CFR 279. These used oils must be managed under the requirements at 40 CFR 279 Subpart C, which includes provisions for burning in on-site space heaters at 40 CFR 279.23.

Your oil-contaminated rags do not meet the definition of "used oil" at 40 CFR 279.1. In general, the EPA states that materials contaminated with used oil are NOT used oil and therefore they are not subject to the used oil rules [40 CFR 279.10(c)(1)]. However, 40 CFR 279.10(c)(2) has a provision that states that materials contaminated with used oil that are burned for energy recovery are subject to regulation under the used oil rules. If your proposed burning of the contaminated rags meets this condition, then you must store them in accordance with the rules in 40 CFR 279.22

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