National Center for Supply Chain Technology Education
RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION & INDUSTRY

Think Green: Safe Lubricant Disposal Saves Time, Money, Environment

Supply chain technicians are typically responsible for lubricating machinery as part of predictive or preventative maintenance to ensure optimum efficiency in any automated warehouse or distribution center. However, safe disposal of the oil used for lubricating machinery is also important. With increased focus on environmental issues companies are now more aware of the environmental impact of waste oil and are looking for ways to reduce that impact.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines used or waste oil as "any oil that has been refined from crude oil, or any synthetic oil that has been used and as a result is contaminated by physical or chemical impurities." While most oil used to lubricate warehouse machinery is non-hazardous it cannot simply be thrown out.

One way warehouses can be more environmentally friendly is by collecting the oil used in machinery lubrication to be recycled or re-refined. Used oil can be collected and recycled multiple times. In fact, according to the EPA, approximately 380 million gallons of used oil are recycled each year in the U.S. Within the supply chain industry, warehouses can filter and recycle certain oils used as machinery lubricants on site or through an energy recycling firm, saving time and money, and reducing companies' environmental impact.

Every year *Inbound Logistics* recognizes 75 firms across the U.S. as Green Supply Chain Partners (G75) in the logistics and transportation field. Firms are chosen based on their environmentally-sustainable initiatives and leadership. Each year several firms including supply chain companies and 3PL (third party logistics providers) are recognized for their used oil waste-reduction efforts including recycling and re-refining.

Sources:

"Managing Used Oil: Advice for Small Businesses EPA530-F-96-004." *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Solid Waste and Emergency Response*. November 1996.

"G75: 75 Green Supply Chain Partners." *Inbound Logistics* June 2013.