



Massachusetts  
Department  
of  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

## fact sheet

# Safe Handling of Waste Oil for Burning in Space Heaters

Many agricultural, commercial, industrial, institutional and municipal facilities use waste oil to fuel space heaters. This form of energy recovery is quite common, but must be done carefully. Waste oil is combustible and, because it is often contaminated with heavy metals, gasoline, chlorinated solvents and other hazardous constituents, it is also classified as a “toxic” waste. For these reasons, proper management is essential.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and its predecessor agencies have regulated waste oil as a hazardous waste since 1973. This fact sheet summarizes MassDEP regulations that require safe handling of waste oil by those who generate, accumulate, transport, treat, recycle, dispose or burn it.

### Waste oil requirements

You may burn oil in a space heater only if it:

- Is generated on-site or transported directly from households or by Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQGs) of waste oil. (Space heater owner/operators and VSQGs must keep signed copies of shipment receipts for at least three years.)
- Contains less than 1,000 parts per million of hazardous chlorinated chemical compounds, is not mixed with any other materials, has a closed-cup flash point greater than 100°F, and meets all manufacturer specifications for the space heater.
- Was derived from petroleum fuels and/or lubricants, but not petrochemicals (such as chlorinated brake fluids, and dielectric and transformer fluids that contain PCBs), animal oils, or vegetable oils.

### Space heating requirements

If you choose to burn waste oil in a space heater, you must:

- Notify DEP as a generator of waste oil and obtain a MassDEP or U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identification number before burning any waste oil.
- Submit a one-time Class A Recycling Notification Form to MassDEP before operating a space heater unless the facility obtained a BWP HW21 Class A Recycling permit before February 27, 2004. See <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/on-site-class-a-recycling-notification>
- Use a space heater with a design capacity of no more than 500,000 British Thermal Units (BTU) per hour to directly heat the immediately surrounding area, and vent combustion gases vertically to the ambient air. (Please note that the space heater may not be connected to external pipes or ducts that provide hot water or heated air for separate industrial or commercial processes.)
- Label all tanks or containers holding waste oil to be burned with “REGULATED RECYCLABLE MATERIAL,” “USED OIL FUEL,” “TOXIC” and the date on which accumulation began in capital letters at least one inch high. Tanks that are hard-piped and/or integrally connected to space heaters do not need to be dated. Keep all tanks and containers closed except when adding or removing waste oil.
- Burn waste oil only between September 15 and June 15.

- Burn (or transfer to another site for recycling) at least 75 percent of all waste oil accumulated on-site during the same calendar year.
- Keep a log of all waste oil accumulated at the beginning each calendar year; generated, burned, transferred off-site and/or received from off-site during the calendar year; and accumulated at the end of the calendar year.
- Never burn waste oil for disposal, between June 15 and September 15, or to generate space heat beyond normal requirements.
- Never modify space heaters to operate them beyond manufacturer specifications.

### **Collecting and transporting waste oil**

Only the following parties may collect and transport waste oil to space heaters in Massachusetts:

- VSQGs and households that self-transport their own waste oil to space heater sites.
- Contractors who generate VSQG quantities of waste oil at multiple sites (usually as a result of servicing oil-containing equipment); are registered with MassDEP; and self-transport no more than 55 gallons at a time from those sites to space heater locations they have registered with MassDEP as their site of waste oil generation.
- A municipal sponsor of a collection center that transports collected waste oil to a space heater operated by the same municipality.

Small Quantity Generators (SQGs) and Large Quantity Generators (LQGs) of waste oil are not allowed to transport it for themselves or for others to the site of a space heater. Owners and operators of space heaters are not allowed to transport waste oil from other sites to their space heater locations. Licensed hazardous waste transporters are not allowed to transport waste oil to a space heater site.

### **Fire safety regulations**

The Massachusetts Department of Fire Services (DFS) separately regulates the use of oil-burning equipment under the state Comprehensive Fire Safety Code (see 527 CMR 1.00, Chapter 11, at <https://www.mass.gov/regulations/527-CMR-100-massachusetts-comprehensive-fire-safety-code>). Before deciding to burn waste oil in a space heater, you should also contact your local fire department for permitting and regulatory requirements related to the Fire Code.

### **For more information**

- Call the MassDEP Used Oil Hotline at (617) 556-1022.
- HW compliance and obtaining an EPA ID:  
<https://www.mass.gov/guides/hazardous-waste-generation-generators>

Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Protection  
One Winter Street  
Boston, MA 02108-4746

Commonwealth of  
Massachusetts

Executive Office of  
Energy & Environmental Affairs

Department of  
Environmental Protection

Produced by the  
Bureau of Waste Prevention,  
July 2016.  
Printed on recycled paper.

This information is available in  
alternate format by calling our  
ADA Coordinator at  
(617) 574-6872.

