

Solvent Recycling Systems

By using a solvent recycling unit, auto body shops can reuse spent solvent and save money on purchasing new solvent as well as hazardous waste disposal costs.

How it Works

Solvent recyclers are small units that do not take up much space. Technicians pour waste gun-wash solvent into the machine where impurities are removed from the solution. The waste is a hockey puck-size clump of dried paint and the solvent can be reused.

If your solvents or paints contain ingredients that are listed either on the [CMR 30.131 hazardous waste list](#) or the [chemical chart under CMR 30.125](#), all wastes and spent filters generated by the recycling unit must be managed as hazardous waste. The waste likely contains blends of chemicals from both solvents and paints and must be tested to determine their hazardous waste code. See the “Hazardous Waste Management” fact sheet for more information.

Benefits

Reduce purchases of thinner or solvent

Shops that use a solvent recycler have reported an 80 percent reduction in solvent purchases, which results in significant savings.

Reduce hazardous waste pickups

Shops have reported a 90 percent reduction in hazardous waste pickups once they started recycling spent solvents rather than disposing of them. The more solvent your shop recycles, the less solvent that accumulates as hazardous waste.

Recycle solvents rather than disposing of them as hazardous waste

If your shop is registered as a Small Quantity Generator (SQG), you may be able to become registered as a Very Small Quantity Generator (VSQG) by recycling spent solvents. Doing so would give you greater regulatory flexibility in managing hazardous waste and eliminate or decrease your yearly compliance fee. The fact sheet on “Hazardous Waste Management” addresses this issue in greater detail.

Take the Next Step

Talk to your supplier

Ask your supplier for suggestions on solvent recycling equipment. Some solvent recyclers are directly connected to gun cleaning equipment while others operate as standalone units and require manual transfer of the spent solvent to the recycling equipment.

Contact the Office of Technical Assistance (OTA):

OTA’s [Tiffany Skogstrom](#) (617-626-1086) and [Marina Gayl](#) (617-626-1077) have expertise in auto shop environmental safety. They can offer free and confidential assistance and advice.

Get a reference

Ask other shop owners about their experiences with onsite solvent recycling systems. If you do not know any shops that are using them, contact OTA (617-626-1060) and ask for a reference.

Send a notification form to MassDEP

All shops with solvent recycling equipment must submit an [On-Site Class A Recycling Notification](#) form to MassDEP before beginning on-site recycling activities.

Track your performance

Many shops have reported significant savings in solvent purchases and hazardous waste pickups after implementing a solvent recycling system. These savings quickly make up for the cost of purchasing recycling units. OTA would like to learn from your shop's experience. Please let us know your results so that we can celebrate your success and spread the word about greener technologies.

Find Additional Information

- The California Department of Toxic Substances Control's [Solvent Recycling](#) fact sheet describes benefits, vendors, and other information.
- The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's [On-Site Solvent Recycling Equipment](#) fact sheet presents detailed considerations about purchasing a solvent recycler. Keep in mind some of the regulatory compliance information in this fact sheet is specific to Ohio rather than Massachusetts.

Success Stories

"I must admit I was a bit skeptical that the solvent recycler would save as much as proposed. However, since purchasing the solvent recycler our waste reduction has saved us over 60 percent per year in reduced solvent purchasing and fewer hazardous waste pickups."

Tom Ricci, Owner, Body & Paint Center (Hudson, MA)

For free and confidential technical assistance or questions, contact:

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