

Fats, Oil and Grease & the Environment

Fats, oil and grease (FOG) are a major environmental problem in cities across Harris County. When you discard your cooking oil into your kitchen sink, it accumulates inside the sewer pipes making it difficult for wastewater to flow freely to the wastewater treatment plant.

When wastewater cannot make its way through the sewer pipes, it overflows into our homes, streets, lawns and storm drains. Storm drains carry rainwater away from homes, and anything that is thrown on the street goes untreated to our water sources such as our bayous, lakes, and Galveston Bay. You can help us keep our water running clean by learning how to dispose of your cooking oil and grease properly.

There are many things that you can do to prevent fats, oil and grease from entering our waterways. First, we'll describe some of the myths about the proper disposal of FOGs. Then, we'll provide ideas on how to keep fats, oil and grease out of our



Myths About FOG

Wash grease with dish soap

Fact: Even though soap breaks up grease, it loses its effectiveness downstream, allowing grease to solidify on the pipe walls.



Running hot tap water will help grease float in the sewer pipe

Fact: Running hot tap water will NOT help grease float through the sewer pipe because the water will eventually cool as it flows through the pipe and the grease will become solid again.



Pour cooking oil at room temperature

Fact: Cooking oil such as canola and olive float on water and adhere to the sewer pipes. It is best to avoid pouring oil down the drain altogether to avoid sewage problems.



How to properly dispose of FOG

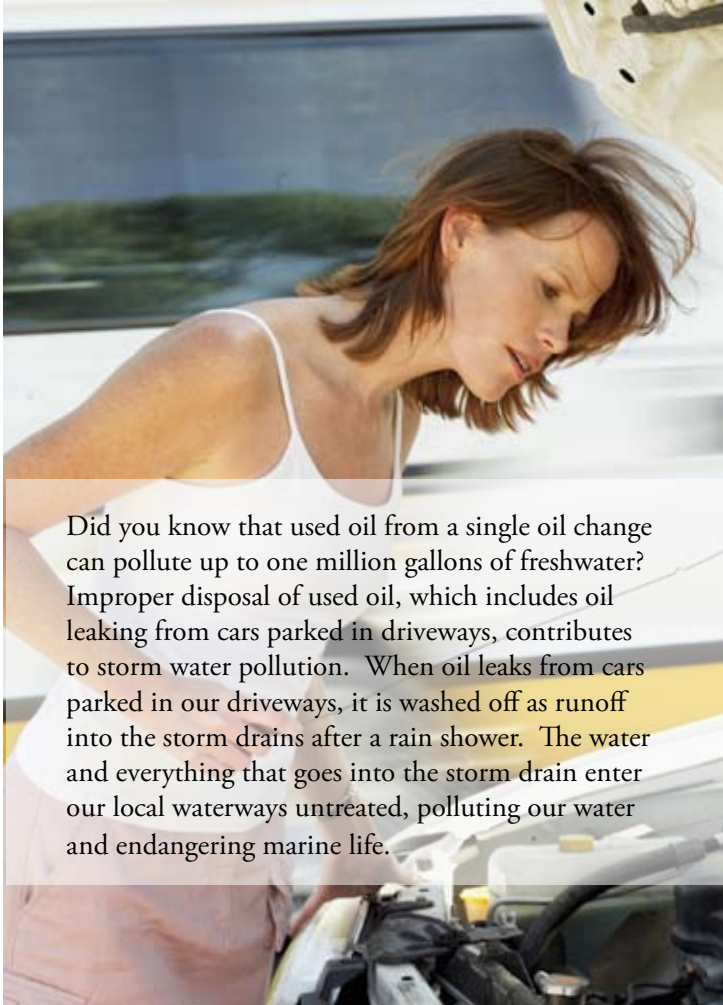
Most household plumbing lines are small, and connect directly to pipes that are only slightly larger. When fats, oil and grease are present in these small pipes, they block the sewage flow. A blocked sewer pipe can cause overflow into homes and streets polluting our waterways including Galveston Bay.

Here is what you can do to protect our natural environment and keep our water free from fats, oil and grease.

- Take liquid oils to your local Household Hazardous Waste facility. This is the best way to get rid of all your fats, oil and grease.
- Pour liquid oils and grease at room temperature into heat resistant plastic bags or old containers such as plastic milk containers, water bottles, or glass jars. Once the container is full, seal it and throw it away with your regular trash.
- Scrape fats, grease and food from plates and cooking utensils into the trash can before washing them or placing them in your dishwasher. Use basket strainers in sinks to catch any food particles and empty the contents in the trash.



What about oil from cars?



Did you know that used oil from a single oil change can pollute up to one million gallons of freshwater? Improper disposal of used oil, which includes oil leaking from cars parked in driveways, contributes to storm water pollution. When oil leaks from cars parked in our driveways, it is washed off as runoff into the storm drains after a rain shower. The water and everything that goes into the storm drain enter our local waterways untreated, polluting our water and endangering marine life.

How to minimize car fluids from entering our waterways

- » Check your car for oil and fluid drips and fix any leaks as soon as possible.
- » If there is a spill, use sawdust or cat litter for clean-up and dispose of it properly.
- » Use a drip pan under your vehicle if you have a leak or are doing engine work.
- » Recycle used motor oil. Contact your local auto supply store or Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility in your city.

Pollution costs us all, and there are fines.

USED OIL DUMPING CRIMINAL OFFENSES AND PENALTIES

- Texas Water Code, Section 7.176
- A person intentionally discharges used oil or knowingly disposes of or otherwise handles any used oil within the State of Texas in violation of the rules for used oil
- Each day is a separate violation
- Fine of not less than \$1,000 or more than \$50,000 and/or imprisonment up to five years

WATER POLLUTION CRIMINAL OFFENSES AND PENALTIES

- Texas Water Code, Section 7.145
- A person intentionally or knowingly discharges or permits the discharge of a waste or pollutant into or adjacent to water in the state that causes or threatens to cause water pollution without strict compliance with all required permits or other authorization; Water in the state includes drainage ditches and storm water sewers
- Each day is a separate violation
- Imprisonment up to five years and/or a fine up to \$100,000.



Report illegal dumping
Harris County PHES: 713-920-2831
City of Houston: 311

Find out where to dispose of FOG
Earth911.org
RecycleInfo.org

CleanWaterways.org

Can Your Fats And keep our water running clean



Preventing fats, oil, and grease from polluting our waterways



CleanWaterways.org