



## Towing Company Management of Fuel- and Oil-Contaminated Debris from Vehicle Accidents

After a motor vehicle collision, police and transportation agencies – not to mention motorists – want to get normal traffic flowing again as soon as possible. Your towing company may be called upon to perform limited accident scene cleanup of fuel, oil and other automotive fluids before removing the vehicle(s) involved, so the affected roadway can re-open.

### Spill Reporting & Cleanup

All spills of fuel or oil need to be cleaned up and should be reported to the local fire department. If a spill originates from a commercial vehicle and appears to be more than ten (10) gallons, it must also be reported to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). While spills from passenger vehicle accidents are generally exempt from reporting requirements, they still need to be cleaned up appropriately.

In most cases, towing company employees who respond to an accident call will stabilize the accident scene by using a granular or powdered absorbent material to contain and/or soak up spills on the pavement, shoulder and ground nearby. If most of the spilled fuel or oil cannot be recovered using an absorbent, then a professional hazardous waste cleanup contractor and/or licensed hazardous waste transporter must be hired by the party responsible to clean up the spill.

If any fuel remaining in a vehicle storage tank can be used as originally intended, it can be removed as a “virgin product”. This fuel is not subject to waste regulations provided your company holds a local fire department permit for storing combustible or flammable liquids at the location where the responding tow truck is garaged.

### Managing Contaminated Debris from an Accident

Once debris from an accident scene has been contaminated with fuel, oil, and/or other automotive/vehicle fluids, it needs to be handled appropriately. The following is guidance for the cleanup of these materials:

- **Gasoline.** Place absorbents contaminated with gasoline in a separate U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) approved container labeled to indicate its contents (i.e. “Absorbents Contaminated with Waste Fuel”), their associated hazards (e.g. combustible, flammable, toxic), and the date on which the material was initially placed in the container.
- **Diesel or Oil.** Absorbents contaminated with diesel fuel, gear oil, motor oil, hydraulic fluid, transmission fluid, other waste oils, or any combination of these must also be placed in a DOT- approved container labeled to indicate contents (i.e. “Absorbents Contaminated with Waste Oil”), their associated hazards (e.g. combustible, flammable, toxic), and the date on which the material was initially placed in the container. Diesel and oil containing

### IMPORTANT NOTES

To report a fuel or oil spill to MassDEP, call the agency’s 24-hour, toll-free notification line:  
**1-888-304-1133**

Your company is responsible for understanding and complying with all local, state and federal hazardous waste cleanup and management requirements, and for training your staff accordingly. Your company may be subject to MassDEP enforcement (which could include significant financial penalties) if it:

- Does not register as a hazardous waste generator and/or as a contractor that self-transportes wastes,
- Fails to notify the appropriate authorities of a spill, or
- Exceeds the waste generation and transportation limits described in this fact sheet.

Massachusetts Department of  
Environmental Protection  
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Boston, MA 02108-4746

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materials may not be placed in containers containing gasoline contaminated materials. Your company may collect **up to 220 pounds** (approximately 27.5 gallons or one-half of a 55 gallon drum) of gasoline-contaminated and **up to 220 pounds** of diesel fuel/oil-contaminated absorbent debris from a single accident scene. These are strict limits. If they are exceeded, your company could be subject to MassDEP enforcement action.

Accumulating the different types of debris in separate containers will make it easier for you to properly characterize the wastes you collect and may lower your disposal costs. Please note that any indistinguishable mixture must be handled as gasoline-contaminated debris.

### Contaminated Debris Transportation

To transport contaminated debris from an accident scene, the following two conditions must be met:

- Your company's property, where the tow truck dispatched to the scene is garaged, must be registered with the MassDEP as a generator of hazardous waste and/or waste oil AND
- Your company must be registered with the MassDEP as a contractor that self- transports these wastes from accident scenes.

You may transport no more than 440 pounds (55 gallons) of contaminated material in a single vehicle to the garage or property that is registered with the MassDEP. Gasoline-contaminated absorbent material (and material that is indistinguishable and is being treated as gasoline-contaminated waste), and diesel fuel/oil-contaminated absorbent material must not be co-mingled and must be placed in separate containers.

The truck transporting the hazardous waste may stop to pick up additional hazardous wastes from other accident scenes, but once the containers in your truck reach the limit of 440 pounds or 55 gallons, or at the end of the work day, the container(s) must be transported directly to your company's property. There, you will need to off-load and properly store the collected debris, then arrange for its pickup and disposal, or recycling, by your waste hauler.

You may check on your current hazardous waste generator registration status here:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/recycle/hazardous/hwgenids.pdf>

If your company is not currently registered with MassDEP to accumulate gasoline-contaminated and diesel/oil-contaminated absorbents or other hazardous waste or waste oil on your property, or to transport these materials to your property, you must:

- **(1) Submit a Generator Registration Form or Notification of Hazardous Waste Activity to MassDEP for each facility/property where you accumulate hazardous waste.** The generator status for which you register will determine how much waste you may accumulate on-site at any one time, and how quickly you will need to ship it off-site for proper recycling or disposal. If your company responds to multiple accidents every month, you will probably want to notify as a Small Quantity Generator (SQG) of both hazardous waste and waste oil. Registration forms and instructions are available on MassDEP's web site. (See **More Information** on page 3 for a link to these.)

**AND**

- **(2) Submit a Generator Registration Form to MassDEP, registering your company as a contractor that transports wastes from accident scenes.** A copy of the Contractor Registration Form should be kept in each of your tow trucks, in case police ask to see it. (See **More Information** on page 3.)

**OR**

- **Wait at the accident scene for a licensed hazardous waste transporter to pick up the contaminated debris.** Keep in mind that the party responsible for an

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accident scene generating more than 220 pounds (27.5 gallons) of gasoline-contaminated and/or diesel fuel/oil-contaminated debris is responsible for hiring a licensed hazardous waste transporter to remove the waste and properly manifest the shipment. Even if your company is registered as a generator of hazardous waste and/or waste oil with MassDEP, this may be a simpler and potentially less expensive approach than taking responsibility for handling, transporting and accumulating contaminated material on your own.

### More Information

- Review the following MassDEP web pages:

Hazardous Waste Generation, Accumulation & Labeling

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/recycle/hazardous/hwgen.html>

Hazardous Waste Generator Status & Storage Limits

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/recycle/hazardous/hazardous-waste-generator-status-and-storage-limits.html>

Hazardous Waste Generator Registration Forms & Directions

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/recycle/approvals/hazardous-waste-forms.html#5>

Policy for Contractors with Hazardous Waste

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/recycle/laws/hwcontra.pdf>

- Call the MassDEP Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistance Line: 617-292-5898

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