



## Iowa Department of Public Health Bureau of Environmental Health Services

### TEH-Waste Oil Fact Sheet

**Overview:** TEH-waste oil is also called hydraulic fluid or used mineral-based crankcase motor oil. Hydraulic fluids and mineral-based crankcase motor oils are used in almost all heavy industries. They are used in construction equipment, tractors, automobiles, and trucks.

#### How are people exposed to waste oil?

Most exposures happen when people work with hydraulic fluid or motor oil. The most common way individuals are exposed is by touching the fluid.

Individuals also can be exposed by:

- Touching contaminated water or soil near hazardous waste sites or industrial manufacturing facilities that use or make hydraulic fluids.
- Breathing the chemicals from the oil in exhaust fumes or from burning the oil as heating fuel.
- Breathing hydraulic fluids in the air near machines where hydraulic fluids are used.

Sometimes, waste oil can get into water below ground. This can happen if fuel leaks out from where it's being stored into the ground. Leaking underground and above ground storage tanks can be common sources of groundwater pollution. Some of this groundwater may be used for drinking water.

To know if you've been exposed to a chemical, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did I breathe it in?
2. Did I touch it?
3. Did I swallow it?

If you answered "no" to all three questions, you were not exposed.

#### How does exposure to waste oil affect my health?

Little is known about how hydraulic fluids and motor oil can affect your health. Workers, who frequently touch used mineral-based crankcase oil, report skin rashes, blood effects (anemia), headaches, and tremors. Since hydraulic fluids are actually mixtures of chemicals, some of the health effects seen may be caused by additives in the hydraulic fluids.

The health impact from exposure to waste oil may vary from person to person. In general, chemicals affect the same organs in all people who are exposed.

If you come in contact with a chemical, the amount and length of time can affect your reaction.

## How you react to a chemical depends on:

- your health
- your genetics
- your previous exposure to chemicals (including medicine)
- your personal habits, such as smoking and drinking.

The effects of breathing in high levels of hydraulic fluids are not known.

## How do I reduce my exposure to waste oil?

- Store fuel oils in air tight containers to prevent evaporation into the air.
- Prevent spills when using or transporting fuel oils.
- If you believe your drinking water well has been polluted with fuel oil, stop using the water. Then, get your water tested.

## Does exposure to waste oil cause cancer?

Neither hydraulic fluids nor mineral-based crankcase oil has been classified as causing cancer in people.

### References:

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). ToxFAQs for Used Mineral-based Crankcase Oil.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). ToxFAQs for Hydraulic Fluids

This fact sheet summarizes information about this chemical and is not a complete listing of all possible effects. It does not refer to work exposure or emergency situations.

## Who should I contact if I want more information?

- Poison Control Center: 800-222-1222
- Your local public health agency
- Iowa Department of Public Health



<http://idph.iowa.gov/>

- Iowa Department of Natural Resources



<http://www.iowadnr.gov/>