

ONE Person, ONE Vehicle... and the World!

"It's not my problem..."

"I'll let someone else worry about it"

"How much harm can ONE vehicle do?"

Well, you'll likely be surprised.

Let's go to the extreme; if you took off your radiator cap, oil cap, brake fluid cap (and every other cap you could see) and dropped your car in the ocean, it would have devastating effects. The five quarts of oil that an average vehicle has could create an oil slick the size of five football fields! An average car has 10 quarts of anti-freeze/coolant which equates to about 320 fluid ounces. Three ounces of anti-freeze/coolant is enough to kill an adult and less could kill children and pets. Then add up the brake fluid, power steering fluid, and transmission oils and you've almost doubled your five-football field oil slick.

One vehicle CAN have a devastating affect on our environment!

We all need to do our part to make sure this doesn't happen. Let's discuss ways that each of us can protect our local waters.

1) REPAIR THOSE LEAKS - As we discovered above, a vehicle has a huge potential to harm the environment if all its harmful chemicals were released at once. Well, a continuously driven vehicle that has oil or coolant leak can cause as much (or even potentially more) damage to the environment. If you find yourself adding fluids monthly, weekly or even daily; you probably have a leak (or bigger problem) that should be fixed ASAP. Though it may seem harmless that oil and antifreeze has leaked onto the road, once it rains most of those chemicals get washed into our streams and oceans. A small leak in half of Oahu's vehicles can be truly devastating! Watch for spots in your driveway; and if discovered, make repairs right away.

2) USE COMMERCIAL CAR WASHES - Taking your car to a commercial car wash is a good way to protect our streams and ocean. Many commercial car washes recycle the water they use and have large water filtration systems to clean the water. If you wash your car on a city street, use plain water or cleansers sparingly. A best practice is to wash your car on a lawn or gravel drive where the water will soak into the ground. The soil will filter out most of the pollutants. Dispose of left-over soapy water in your bucket into a toilet or sink, not down the storm drain, where it flows to our streams and the ocean.

3) RECYCLE YOUR OIL - The best practice is to have your oil changed by a shop that recycles their waste oil. Most shops in Hawaii will do this. If you are going to change your own oil; use an "oil change box", which can be purchased at your parts distributor to dispose of your waste oil. They are inexpensive and easy to use. Never use old oil to kill weeds or allow oil to go down a storm drain! When changing your oil, do it away from storm drains and have old rags around to respond in case of a spill.

4) RECYCLE ANTIFREEZE/COOLANT - The best choice here is to go to a shop that recycles their coolants. Used coolants should not be flushed down the drain because they contain pollutants that may cause problems for wastewater treatment plants. Have your radiator hoses checked when changing your oil and have your car inspected at the first sign of a coolant leak. Large coolant leaks could be very damaging to the environment and driving a vehicle with a coolant leak could cause extensive damage to your car's engine.

5) RETURN USED BATTERIES - Return your old car batteries to the place you bought them. Be careful, old batteries may leak acid! Wear gloves and goggles and put the old battery in a leak proof container. If you drop it, neutralize any spilled acid with baking soda or lime.

6) CHECK TIRE PRESSURES - One of the simplest and cheapest ways to prevent pollution is to keep your tires inflated! For every pound that your tires are under-inflated, your car loses about 1% in gas mileage. Under-inflated tires also wear out sooner which adds to the tire recycling burden. By reducing the amount of gasoline your car burns, properly inflated tires reduce the amount of polluted exhaust that your car makes. Keeping your vehicle properly aligned is also a key way to extend gas and tire mileage.

7) DRIVE LESS! - Driving less is the best way to prevent pollution. Water quality tests show that most polluted run off comes from heavily traveled highways and streets. Car pooling or using public transportation are great ways to cut down on the amount of vehicles on the road, and thus reducing the amount of pollutions they produce.

Being an Environmental Hero is not difficult. We just need to realize that ALL of us have an impact on our environment. A little extra effort by everyone can make a huge difference in the end.

- SCOTT D. WILLIAMS, GENERAL MANAGER

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