

State and Local Agencies Give Re-Refined Oil the Green Light

Introduction

Each day Americans use 77 million barrels of oil. Oil provides about 40 percent of the energy Americans consume and 97 percent of our transportation fuels. The bad news is that oil is a non-renewable resource and, at the current consumption rate, we have about 70 years' worth of oil supply remaining. The good news is that oil can be reused.

Lubricating oil does not wear out but it becomes dirty as it cleans and protects a car engine. Because the quality of oil is critical to the car's performance, the American Petroleum Institute certifies oil that meets a recommended standard. Re-refined oil is subject to the same stringent refining and performance standards as virgin oil. Extensive laboratory testing and field studies show that re-refined oil is equivalent to virgin oil.

Re-Refined Oil and Engine Performance

State agencies are now mandated to use re-refined oil and have reported no problems resulting from using re-refined oil. Industry experts confirmed that no difference has been detected in engine performance with consistent use of the product over a 15-year period. The cost difference between virgin and re-refined oil is negligible, if any. Agency representatives noted a significant drop in re-refined oil prices during the past several years.

Why Use Re-Refined Oil?

Of the 1.4 billion gallons of used oil generated each year, an estimated 200 million gallons is simply dumped into sewers and oceans—more than all marine oil spills combined. Using re-refined oil instead of virgin oil saves a natural, nonrenewable resource without compromising quality or increasing spending. This choice reduces America's dependence on foreign oil, conserves natural resources and energy, and eliminates waste material.

California's State and Local Agencies

The State of California is a major purchaser of re-refined oil. As of January 2000, all State agencies are required to spend at least 50 percent of the total dollars allocated for lubricating oils on re-refined oil. The goal of this mandate to purchase re-refined oil is to save a nonrenewable resource. Re-refineries can produce one gallon of re-refined oil from three gallons of used motor oil. In addition to State agencies, local governments are also purchasing re-refined oil.

CalTrans

Testing re-refined oil on California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) vehicles began 15 years ago. In the year 2000, nearly 90,000 gallons of re-refined oil were used in CalTrans vehicles. "Initially, it took a long time to convince users that re-refined oil was equal to virgin oil," said Tom Johnson, highway equipment superintendent.

The Department of General Services

The Department of General Services (DGS) maintains a fleet of approximately 7,000 vehicles. According to the Office of Fleet Administration Chief, Deborah Vaughn, "DGS has been using re-refined oil in all our State garages for many years without any adverse effects whatsoever." Visit the Office of Fleet Administration's Web site at www.ofa.dgs.ca.gov/ for a list of State garages and authorized vendors offering re-refined oil. More than 70 oil change locations in California provide re-refined oil.

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is responsible for 31 million acres in California. It safeguards Californians from fires, responds to emergencies, and protects the forests. The agency has about 3,000 vehicles including heavy equipment for fire control, snow removal,

and road maintenance. Following CalTrans' lead, CDF has been using re-refined oil almost exclusively for the past five years. Eighty-five percent of the CDF budget is dedicated to fire protection services. Nearly 400 fire engines, each valued at approximately \$200,000, are lubricated with re-refined oil. "The quality of re-refined oil isn't an issue for us. It is comparable to virgin oil," explained Gary Selig, mobile equipment manager.

The Department of Parks and Recreation

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is primarily responsible for maintenance and enforcement at State parks. DPR services 3,400 vehicles, many of which use re-refined oil. "Some individuals think re-refined oil is the same as what used to be reclaimed oil and that is completely wrong. It's a matter of educating the public so they know re-refined is as good as virgin oil," says Brenda Livingstone, business services officer.

The California Highway Patrol

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) ensures public safety on California's highway transportation system. Annually, the CHP spends about \$110,000 on 22,000 gallons of re-refined oil. The CHP maintains 3,800 enforcement vehicles that drive more than 110 million miles yearly.

Patrol cars put the biggest strain on engines, because officers sometimes must travel at speeds of 125 to 130 miles per hour. "At first, many of our mechanics didn't want to use re-refined oil and thought that the specifications were not suitable for high performance police cars," said Gary Huskinson, CHP Business Services Officer. "We discovered re-refined oil went through a much different process than the original filtering method used to reclaim oil," said Huskinson.

Kern County

Kern County maintains a fleet of about 380 vehicles. For the past five years, Kern County has been using re-refined oil in their fleet. According to Chuck Magee, Solid Waste Management Specialist, Kern County has not experienced any problems by using re-refined oil.

City of Thousand Oaks

The City of Thousand Oaks maintains a fleet totaling 450 vehicles, including cars, trucks, compressed natural gas buses and small equipment. Since 1993, the city has used re-refined oil in all vehicles and has seen no performance problems or engine failures.

"Re-refined oil is the only environmentally responsible oil that meets the same tough performance standards as other top brands while protecting our natural resources," said Donald H. Nelson, public works director.

Resources

State Procurement Contract

It is easy to buy re-refined oil through the Statewide Commodity Contract. California Public Contract Code section 10298 allows cities, counties, districts or other local governmental body or corporation empowered to expend public funds to utilize State contracts.

State and local agencies may use contract number 1-01-91-03 to purchase re-refined oil at <http://pdrox.pd.dgs.ca.gov/pin/html/1-01-91-03.htm>. The State contract has various re-refined oil grades in quarts, 55 gallons, or bulk quantities. For further information, contact Dianne Cardona at (916) 375-4458 or dianne.cardona@dgs.ca.gov. The Web site for the DGS Division of Procurement is www.pd.dgs.ca.gov/.

CIWMB

Visit www.ciwmb.ca.gov/UsedOil/Rerefined/ for more information on re-refined oil including the automotive industry positions.

Oil Re-Refineries

Evergreen Oil (www.evergreenoil.com/) and Safety-Kleen (www.ac-rerefined.com/) are the only companies in the U.S. currently re-refining oil.

Clean Washington Center

Recycling technology reports are at www.cwc.org/.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, Flex Your Power and visit www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html.