

Pollution Prevention for Aerosol Cans

Those Handy Aerosol Cans

Walk down the aisle of any store and you will find rows of aerosol cans containing cleaners, personal care products, automotive fluids, paints, and lubricants. No doubt about it, aerosols are handy and easy to use.

Come At A High Price

But for many companies, aerosol containers are becoming a problem. They are expensive and they often contain hazardous substances and must be managed and disposed of as hazardous waste.

To Reduce Them

Eliminating and reducing toxics, waste and pollution helps the environment. It also saves money, creates a healthier work environment, increases your company's efficiency and makes it more competitive. Reducing the use of aerosol cans is a good place to start. Here are some suggestions:

Involve Employees

Ask employees to minimize aerosol use. Prompt them to completely empty aerosol cans before disposing of them. Encourage them to make suggestions on substitutes and other ways to minimize aerosols. Recognize and reward success.

Audit Aerosol Use

Inventory aerosol cans in stock and past aerosol purchases. Determine which ones are essential and which are duplicate or unnecessary.

Implement Controls

Make an "OK To Purchase" List of aerosols that are essential. Require special approval to purchase other aerosols. Limit inventory access.

Use Up Current Inventory

Don't dispose of aerosol cans in stock. Use them up completely before disposing of them.

Substitute Non-Aerosols

Studies show that workers use less of an aerosol cleaner if they spray it on a rag and then apply it to the part instead of directly spraying it on the part. Perhaps it would be possible to use a squirt bottle and a rag instead of an aerosol. A portable wash unit is another alternative

Use Refillable Pumps

Use refillable pump-sprayers instead of disposable aerosol cans. Some refillable spray containers can be recharged with compressed air. Purchasing commonly-used fluids, such as brake cleaner, in bulk results in substantial cost savings.

Substitute Non-Hazardous Materials

Determine which aerosols contain hazardous substances. Ask the vendor, your trade association, and others about non-hazardous substitutes. After some trial and error, you may be successful in eliminating a dangerous material from your workplace.

And Drain And Recycle Empty Containers

Some companies use devices to puncture aerosol cans and drain the contents for reuse. See if there is a way to economically recycle drained aerosol cans with other scrap metals.

Two Arizona Success Stories

City of Phoenix Sign Shop:

The Sign Shop uses aerosol cans of paint. When the cans are empty, they may contain residual product. The City uses a device to puncture the cans, capture and filter the propellant, and drain the residual paint for disposal. The cans are then legally disposed as a non-hazardous waste. Previously, disposal as a hazardous waste cost about \$3 per can. For information, call Lonnie Thacker at (602) 261-8076.

Salem Boy's Auto, Tempe:

Salem Boy's purchases carburetor and brake cleaners in bulk and uses a pump dispenser to refill sprayers. The sprayers are reusable and are recharged with compressed air. There are significant cost savings, and disposal of aerosol cans, lids, boxes and cases is eliminated. For information, call Mark Salem at (602) 598-1234.