

# DRUM RECONDITIONING INFORMATION SHEET.

## 1. Introduction

Metal and plastic drums are used to deliver a variety of goods in the market. Once used and surplus to the needs of the user of the goods, the drums are discarded, these containers usually find their way into the public for various uses in businesses and homes. This type of packaging is a resource that is too good to waste which should be returned for safe reprocessing and re-use.



The environmental hazards associated with the drums are dependent on its former contents and need to be appropriately managed so as to not result in environmental harm and health of the people. The drum reconditioning industry plays an important role as they can remove the residual chemicals in the drum which can harm the environment and the health of the people who use them.

The re-use of the drum for the delivery of goods is the preferred practice, followed by the recycling of the metal or plastic of the drum. Disposal is the least preferred option in accordance with the Waste Management Hierarchy. RPMSA highlighted that less than 10% (1 million) of the approximately 10 million containers or drums manufactured annually get collected for re-use or recycling.

## 2. Why discarded drums are a challenge?

A large number of people, especially the rural and farming communities, are affected by the practice of using chemically contaminated containers to collect, carry and store water for drinking, storage of animal feeds and other domestic use. Some informal traders are involved in the business of selling chemically contaminated plastic drums/containers to the public which are purchased or stolen from chemical industries.

## Impact on the environment

These containers are cleaned on the streets and the residues from these activities are usually emptied/dumped/discharged into the storm water drains or rinsed in wells, streams and rivers, into public sewage systems in urban areas or directly onto the environment in rural areas and ultimately into the water bodies.

## Impact on human health

A number of chemical poisoning incidents resulting in deaths have been reported from the use of chemically contaminated containers.

There is a lack of awareness from the generators, manufacturers and traders in educating the citizens on the risks associated with exposure to various toxic chemicals through the use of contaminated drums/containers for domestic purposes. This also indicates a lack of control on the part of the chemicals

industry in preventing these drums from reaching the public.

## 3. Environmental issues and potential impacts

The following activities might take place at the facilities:

- Storage of drums on site
- Effluent generated on-site

Drum reconditioning centres receive drums/containers which most of the time require emptying before they are cleaned and then prepared for reuse. The residues coming from these drums if not handled in an environmentally sound manner may contaminate the environment. Potential contaminants from these centres are oily waste created at the sites and hydrocarbon fuels,

solvents, pesticides, detergents, acids and alkalis used in various activities on the site. Many of these and other substances used in smaller quantities for example ferrous and aluminium sulphates are water soluble and their release or disposal may lead to contamination of ground or surface water. Sources of potential contamination are leakage from underground storage tanks and pipelines as well as spillages in areas where tanks and drums containing these chemicals are stored as well as surface runoff from the storing and washing areas if adequate containment is not provided.

## 4. Mitigation measures

Mitigation measures are required for activities, processes and services that have or can have a significant impact on the environment. Mitigation measures can include, but are not limited to:

- Management and monitoring
- Operating procedures
- Reduction of waste and effluent
- Training and Awareness
- Prevention of waste and effluent from entering the environment

## 5. Facilities licensed to manage drums

A list of facilities in your province that are licensed to manage drums is available on the South African Waste Information Centre [www.sawic.environment.gov.za](http://www.sawic.environment.gov.za)

[www.environment.gov.za](http://www.environment.gov.za)

Call Centre 086 111 2468



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