

## **Tire Recycling: Reinventing the Wheel**

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With more than 12 million generated every year in Ontario, the disposal of used tires has long posed an environmental challenge. The large bulky rubber wheels take up valuable landfill space and should not be buried in the ground. While a small percentage of Ontario's used tires have been recycled, a more common strategy has been to send them out of province where they would be burned for fuel – a practice criticized for emitting dangerous fumes into the atmosphere. As a result of the limited options for tire disposal, there are now almost 3 million tires in 95 stockpiles across the province.

Tire stockpiles are undesirable for a number of reasons. They are breeding grounds for mosquitoes and the West Nile virus. They are also serious fire hazards. In 1990, 14 million stockpiled tires in Hagersville, Ontario caught fire. The flames burned for 17 days, making this the largest tire fire in history. In response, the Ontario government introduced a \$5.00 tire disposal fee designed to deal with the problem of stockpiles. Not much was accomplished, however, and the government lifted the tire disposal fee after only 5 years.

Thankfully, the haphazard disposal of tires in Ontario will soon be a thing of the past. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, the Ontario Tire Stewardship (OTS), a not-for-profit organization developed by Waste Diversion Ontario, launched a new Used Tire Program. The Used Tire Program aims to recycle 90% of scrap tires and eliminate the province's tire stockpiles within 3-5 years.

Ontario's tire recycling program, the first of its kind in Canada, is based on Extended Producer Responsibility. Holding producers responsible for the environmentally sustainable disposal of their products is the cornerstone of all of Ontario's recycling programs, including the Blue Box, household hazardous waste and waste electronics programs. The Used Tire Program will therefore be funded by Brand Owners and First Importers, also known as Stewards. The tire Stewards will pay a Tire Stewardship Fee to OTS for every tire they introduce to the Ontario market.

The fee collected by OTS will be used to provide incentives and support to collectors, haulers, and recyclers of used tires. This means that as a registered collection site the Ottawa Valley Waste Recovery Centre (OVWRC) is now able to accept a maximum of 9 tires per customer per day free of charge from residents and businesses within our partner municipalities. Loads of 10 or more tires will continue to be charged the bulk tire rate of \$375 per tonne (first 40 kgs free). There is no need to separate tires of varying sizes or tires that have rims.

The tires collected at OVWRC will be picked up by a licensed tire recycler and either retreaded, reused or recycled into a variety of uses such as tire crumb for sports fields and playgrounds, drainage bed material, and blasting mats. Crumbed tires also make great pathways as OVWRC's front landscaping demonstrates!



While the Ontario Tire Stewardship may not actually be reinventing the wheel, they are reinventing the way that we recycle them. For more information, visit [www.ovwrc.com](http://www.ovwrc.com) or [www.ontariots.ca](http://www.ontariots.ca).