

# Old tires are tough to recycle

Q. I followed your series on solid waste and was particularly interested in recycling. However, there was no mention of what can be done with old tires. Can these tires be recycled or must they just be thrown away?

A. Discarded tires are a special problem in the solid waste area. Currently "disposing" of used tires can be done in two ways.

One is to landfill them, but this has many drawbacks. Old tires do not remain buried in landfills, but rise to the surface. They also take up a lot of space in landfills. Many landfill operators refuse to take tires or charge an extra fee because of these additional problems.

The second "disposal" method is to stockpile them. Nearly 60 percent of all discarded tires go this route. This method, however, can cause such environmental problems as air pollution, if the pile should catch fire, and disease. These piles make excellent breeding grounds for disease-carrying mosquitoes.

Despite these disposal problems with tires, it is estimated that 240 million tires — one for each person in the United States — are discarded each year.

SEVERAL METHODS to reclaim this tire material are currently being tested around the country.

In Modesto, Calif., Oxford Energy Co. got approval to burn the 42 million tire stockpile in a controlled environment to generate electricity for the local utility.

## Volunteers are needed

Complete Hospice Care, 21700 Greenfield, Oak Park, needs hospice volunteers to work flexible hours to provide emotional support and respite care for patients. Excellent training is provided. Call Delores Reynolds on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 988-6060.

For information on other opportunities or if your organization needs volunteers, call the Center for Volunteerism, United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit, 226-0429, or write 1212 Griswold, Detroit 48226-1899.



Terry Gibb

This tire-burning facility is the first of its kind in the country. The system is designed to burn the tires at approximately 2,000 degrees, which is hot enough to destroy any potentially hazardous hydrocarbons, dioxins and furans.

This tire incineration plant began operation last August. It runs 24 hours a day and uses up an estimated 4 million tires a year.

A tire recycling alternative is being developed by Rubber Research Elastomerics (RRE) in Minnesota. RRE has developed a method where finely ground-up tires are actively cross-linked with other rubber.

RRE hopes newly recycled rubber, called Tirexyc, will expand from its current limited market into markets now dominated by "virgin" rubber and plastic. The Minnesota facility has the capacity to process 4 million tires. However, current demand will only result in the recycling of 600,000 tires.

TIRE RECOVERY is plagued by problems.

They are expensive to transport to these recovery facilities and to shred for reuse. Because of these high initial costs, they are not presently cost-competitive with established, low-priced methods.

However, if the predictions are accurate, this cost imbalance could change. Experts predict that another energy crisis by the late 1990s will drive up the cost of petroleum, the key ingredient in synthetic rubber used in tires today.

Ironically, the biggest potential market for recycled tires could be the industry that produces them — tire manufacturers.

Recycling old tires to make new would use less energy and reduce the amount of petroleum required for virgin synthetic rubber. Recovering their own material

may be just the way to remain competitive in the marketplace. Let's hope it's soon.

The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to The Consumer Mailbag, Concern Detroit, 1 Kennedy Square, Detroit 48226.

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# SOUND ADVICE.

There are some very interesting ways you can find a doctor. You can ask friends, relatives or co-workers for a recommendation. Since there are as many opinions as there are people, you may end up with a confusing collection of names and phone numbers. Without having the slightest idea of who the doctors are or where they're located. You may also choose to open up your telephone book and, well - good luck.

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