



Courtesy photo

Brian Faber, solid waste manager at Environment Management Division, Directorate of Public Works, explains to Soldiers from 19th Engineer Battalion how the new oil filter will work in existing motor vehicle drip pans. The filters will save the Army money.

DPW finds inexpensive solution to oily water disposal

By ERIC PILGRIM
EDITOR

Officials at the Directorate of Public Works in Fort Knox have introduced a simple, inexpensive solution to motorpool operations that could save the Army money.

The problem involves how to separate oil from water. The solution: pillows.

“It’s a plastic drum with a spigot in the bottom of it,” said Brian Faber, solid waste manager at the Environment Management Division. “[Soldiers] drain the drip pans for their vehicles into it and out comes water.”

Faber explained that the need for a solution arose when members of 19th Engineer Battalion struggled to know

what to do with old oil pooling in their drip pans that had mixed with rainwater. Soldiers would dump the mixture into a 660-gallon container to keep from violating Environmental Protection Agency rules, and then DPW would pay a vendor 48 cents a gallon to pick up the contents and haul it away for proper disposal. The cost amounted to more than \$315 for each container.

The new filtering system uses layers of specially designed pillows that sit inside the container. Soldiers dump their drip pan contents into it and the pillows absorb the oil, allowing the water to filter through to the bottom.

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“The potential of a spill is almost alleviated when we use this system,” Faber said.

Once the pillows reach their saturation level, they are bagged and hauled to the contaminated soil dumpster at the landfill. Another bonus is the system’s size and simplicity, making it mobile for field operations and free of the need for an expensive permit to operate it.

Faber met with Soldiers and leaders from 19th Engineers on Nov. 27 to demonstrate how the process works. He said they jumped onboard.

His plan going forward is to mount the container onto a cart “so on Monday morning when they have formation, a couple of guys can come around and the Soldiers can empty their drip pans.”

Each system costs roughly \$400 and will process up to 33 gallons of pure product. According to Faber, it should last a year.

“It will save the Army a lot of money, both from the cost of paying somebody to dispose of the oily water and also in potential EPA notices of violation,” said Faber. “It saves us heartache, too.”

Faber said the next step is to order more systems for the installation.

“In the summertime when we have cadet summer training, we’re going to have this deployed at the bus parking lot,” Faber said. “Anything we can do to help the Soldier out, we’re going to do it.” ■