



# Making a Pit Stop for the Environment

When a car stops in a race for refueling, new tires, or repairs, it's called a pit stop. An unexpected or extended stop can cost the driver the race — so advance planning by the race team is key to gaining a competitive advantage. This holds true for vehicle repair shops as well.



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In Connecticut there are over 4,500 auto repair and body shops working to keep our vehicles running smoothly. Many different types of parts and fluids are required to accomplish this goal. However if these parts and fluids are improperly managed when removed from a vehicle, they can have a negative impact on air and water quality. Improper management can also expose employees to hazardous chemicals and lead to fines and increased liability for the business.

To continue to assist vehicle service facilities in planning a strategy to better manage these wastes, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has updated its "Pit Stops" guidebook. The compilation of fact sheets contains information on all aspects of environmental regulations and pollution prevention tips pertaining to vehicle repair. Stakeholders from outside groups involved in repair or bodywork helped develop the fact sheets.

Recently DEEP partnered with the Connecticut Automotive Retailers Association (CARA) and held a workshop that attracted service managers from car dealerships located around the state. Attendees received the updated Pit Stops guidebook and a laminated checklist.

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# Making a Pit Stop for the Environment

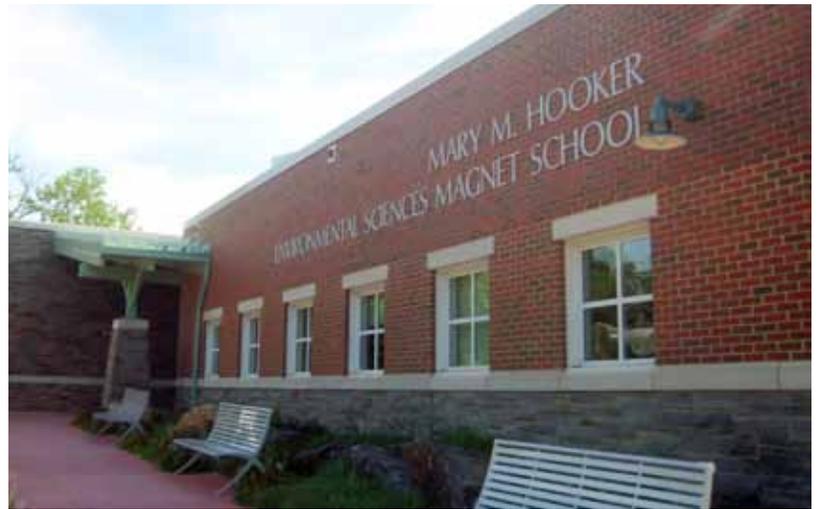
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The attendees were shown how to use the checklist on an on-going basis as a quick reference to gauge compliance at their facilities. A second workshop is planned for October for public works garage employees.

The Pit Stops fact sheets and checklist are available on DEEP's website at [www.ct.gov/deep/pitstops](http://www.ct.gov/deep/pitstops). For more information, contact DEEP's Office of Pollution Prevention at 860-424-3297.



## Living Green and Learning Green Go Hand in Hand



One of the most sustainable and energy efficient schools in the U.S. is right here in Hartford, Connecticut. The Mary M. Hooker Environmental Sciences Pre-K through 8th Grade Magnet School has achieved the LEED Platinum rating from the U.S. Green Building Council for its renovation and expansion, making it only the 11th school nationwide to receive this prestigious rating. LEED which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is a certification system with four certification levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. With the Platinum rating being the most difficult to achieve, only three buildings in Connecticut have reached this milestone.

The school's green initiatives are noticeable when you first arrive on the campus:

- **Wildflower borders instead of lawn** help conserve water, and detention basins help reduce storm water runoff and provide a natural irrigation system for water re-entering the environment.

- **Preferred parking spaces** are available to individuals that carpool or own a low-emitting vehicle. A row of bicycle racks and safe bicycling paths to school encourage students and faculty to commute by bicycle.
- If you arrive at night, you notice that **light pollution reduction technology** is installed on all outdoor lighting, which helps eliminate disruptions to nocturnal animals.

Not as noticeable is the school's 450kw **cogeneration system** that generates both electricity and heat for the school from one fuel source. Renewable energy is also made on-site by **solar panels**. Additionally, the building's **reflective white roof** keeps the building cooler and reduces demand for air conditioning by reflecting sunlight that would normally be absorbed by a darker colored roof. **Occupancy lighting sensors** throughout the building further save energy.

Using green building materials was also part of the construction process. **Beams were salvaged** from another Hartford school building and reused at Mary Hooker. New materials purchased were local, most coming from within a 50-mile radius. Environmentally-friendly **carpet, glues, and cork as well as low VOC paints and floor wax** are examples of the greener materials used in construction and maintenance. The gymnasium floor is even made from **recycled sneakers**.

The school's windowed lobby features a **freshwater pond ecosystem** used for scientific investigation when weather prevents outdoor field study. The Koi fish swimming among the pond plants in the **day-lit space** contribute not only to student education but also a sense of beauty and serenity for the school community to enjoy. The environmental science magnet school also features an **aquatics lab, a greenhouse, and a butterfly vivarium** that provide enriching educational ecosystems. Students from every grade do research in these systems under the guidance of two resident scientists.

The school goes beyond recycling the basics by making their own **compost from leftover food waste**. The compost is used in the school's greenhouse and outside where children have an opportunity to **garden and farm organically**. Highly visible collection boxes in the school's lobby enable both students and families to recycle used printer ink cartridges and cell phones.

As a magnet school, the Mary Hooker School **integrates environmental science themes into core subjects** like math, language arts, and social studies as well as music, art and physical education. Having a LEED certified building was important because the school wanted to have a facility that reflects what is being taught. As Magnet Team Coach for Science Kirsten Devlin explained, "We really wanted to live and breathe environmental science." The school has become the **ultimate role model of environmental practices** and sustainable living for not only the students, but for the community and other schools as well.



*Science coach Kirsten Devlin in front of the freshwater pond ecosystem inside the school lobby.*

# CT Company Provides Option for Greening Earthly Remains



*Producing eco-friendly caskets in Willimantic, Connecticut*

The Connecticut Casket Company is helping people who care about treading lightly on the planet during their lifetime continue to do so afterward. With technical assistance, funding and loans from several agencies including the Connecticut Small Business Development Center, the Northeast CT Economic Alliance and CT Department of Economic and Community Development job creation program, this Willimantic manufacturer is able to provide a green alternative for burials. They have created affordable dignified caskets that are earth friendly.

The Connecticut Casket Company's caskets are built of pine and do not contain pressed or chemical enhanced plywood. No metal or plastic hardware is used; instead pieces are secured with locking miter joints and environmentally-friendly glue. They are sanded down and finished only with 100% natural Tung oil. They also make a green casket mattress filled with wood shavings from their shop, as well as an unbleached muslin cotton case.

The Connecticut Casket Company is certified by the Green Burial Council, an organization working to

make partnerships between funeral homes and manufacturers and make certain that products and practices meet environmental standards.

While not the easiest topic to broach, eco-burials are on the upswing because environmentally-conscious individuals and their family members want their funeral and burial choices to be green. Other practices include biodegradable coffins, low-key grave markers made from petrified wood, and no embalming. Some cemeteries now have areas designated for this type of burial and simpler interment. They do not require vaults or other expensive add-ons, and provide more natural burial settings.

#### **Additional information:**

**Connecticut Casket Company:** 860-786-7687, [www.ctcaskets.com](http://www.ctcaskets.com)

**Green Burial Council:** [www.greenburialcouncil.org](http://www.greenburialcouncil.org) includes a **planning guide**, list of **certified providers**, and **recent articles**.

# A Better Design for Parking

It's common knowledge that driving a car contributes to air pollution, but who knew parking your car also has a substantial impact on the environment. Whether you drive an economy model or a big SUV, it requires a nine-by-eighteen-foot paved area to park it. In the U.S. alone, parking spaces occupy an area larger than Delaware and Rhode Island put together.

Parking lots and garages are such a common part of our landscape that they often go unnoticed and their effect is ignored. However, they add polluted stormwater runoff to local streams and rivers, create heat islands, increase light pollution and consume large amounts of land, resulting in loss of green space and increased urban sprawl.

But change is in the works. The newly created national Green Parking Council, based in Hartford, is promoting green parking practices and has a sustainability certification for parking facilities. Considering the environmental impact of parking has brought recognition by the Council to 25 facilities, three of which are in Connecticut. The Chapel Square Garage in New Haven, the Convention Center Garage in Hartford and the Water Street Parking Garage in New London each have features like energy-efficient LED lighting, spaces for compact cars and scooters, and no-irrigation landscaping.

The Chapel Square Garage, located at the Omni Hotel, also has an electric vehicle charging station, a tire-inflation station, recycle bins, and bike racks. The Water Street Parking Garage has signs promoting efficient traffic flow, and has added an art space on the side of the building, a unique place for public art that enhances the aesthetics of the garage and the street. The Convention Center Garage has free motorcycle and scooter parking.

Parking lots, rather than garages, tend to dominate our suburban towns. They too can be designed to reduce environmental impact while improving the look and function of parking. Landscaping practices such as strategically planting trees to break up the monotony of parking lots, having medians, bioswales or rain gardens to catch stormwater, and using porous asphalt and alternative pavers can all make a big difference.

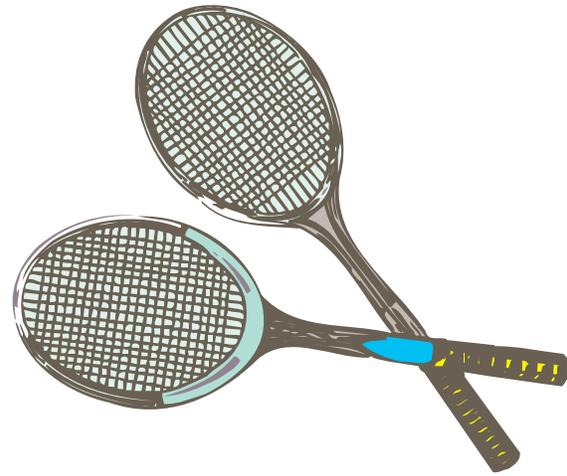
There are also a handful of other ways to reduce the environmental impact of parking and driving. The City of New Haven, for example, promotes the use of hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles through its free metered parking program for cars registered in the city. Car sharing, either through a company like Zipcar or by individuals, is making its way to our state and is yet another way to reduce pollution. Local parking policies can designate parking spaces exclusively to shared cars as a way to incentivize their use.



*Artspace on New London's Water Street parking garage*

**Here are some resources to help you re-think parking in your community:**

- [Green Parking Council](#)
- [Green Garage Associates](#)
- [EPA's Green Parking Lot Resource Guide](#)



## Doing De-cluttering, Doing Good

Summertime is a great time to de-clutter or renovate — but along with that comes trash. Minimize what you need to throw away by donating unused, unwanted items in good condition. Most people are familiar with non-profit organizations (like Good Will or Salvation Army) that accept clothing, household goods and furniture. But who wants those “not so easy to figure out what to do with” items? Here are a few ideas to get you started.



- The **Lions Club** and the **OneSight** programs sponsor collection boxes for used eyeglasses. Boxes can be found at Pearl Vision, Lens Crafters, Target Optical, Sears Optical and Sunglass Hut Stores. You will also find Lion’s Club-sponsored boxes at libraries, schools, community centers, places of worship, and optometrists’ offices. Donated glasses are cleaned, repaired and then boxed and shipped to developing countries for international optical missions.
- **Horns For Kids** will take gently used, brass, woodwind, string and percussion instruments, even if they need some repair. They will pick up the instrument at your home or business, or a UPS Store close to you will pack and ship the instrument to them.
- It’s pretty easy to recycle or donate most books except for textbooks, references and encyclopedias. **Recycle Your Textbooks** provides colleges and schools with collection bins and donations that benefit the American Cancer Society. There are other organizations which will accept text and reference books that are shipped to them, including **Books For Africa** and **Green Textbooks**.
- **Hospital for Special Care** is one of many organizations that accept durable medical equipment (canes, walkers, shower chairs, etc.)
- Looking for a project for Boy or Girl Scouts or other group? Although **Sports Gift** doesn’t accept used sports equipment directly, they will help you set up a collection for needy kids in your community.
- Are you redoing a kitchen or bathroom this summer? Don’t throw away those kitchen cabinets or vanities. Donate them and more to the **ReCONNstruction Center** in New Britain. Check their website or call for their building materials donation guidelines.



For more recycling, reuse or donation options for your unwanted items, check out DEEP’s web page, **What Do I Do With?**

# Ask Eartha

*My family loves to barbeque, and in the summer we especially like sitting around our fire pit. We also go camping and enjoy making s'mores by the fire. But I'm concerned about the environmental and health effects of all this burning.*

**What should we do?**

— Nancee P., Windsor, CT



For many Americans, summertime, campfires, and barbequing go hand in hand. Not only are they a great way to get the family together, they are a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and the beautiful weather. Burning wood, charcoal briquettes and propane gas can impact health and the environment — like irritating eyes, throat and lungs from smoke and particulates and producing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that contribute to climate change. You don't have to give up enjoying this fun pastime — but you can take steps reduce the environmental impacts.

Let's start with the fire pit. It's best to use some type of metal container, even the top of a metal trash can, elevated off the ground 3" to 4", so you don't scorch the ground. If you are at a facility that has a built-in pit or you already own a manufactured pit, then

you're all set. Another option is to build a mound 6 to 8 inches thick with soil and make the fire atop it.

Be mindful of which direction the smoke is blowing and do your best to position your fire to avoid contact with smoke and keep it from impacting nearby homes and campsites. Also, make sure that when you are finished enjoying your fire, extinguish it completely. When at a designated camping area, follow the fire restrictions and laws of the campground when constructing your fire.

Now, on whether to use a gas or charcoal grill, there are several factors to consider but all-in-all, gas is the better way to go. Gas grills are more efficient for cooking — you can easily adjust the flame level and turn it off immediately when done. They, too, have environmental impacts because they use natural resources and produce carbon dioxide. However, the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory compared the carbon output of gas, and charcoal grills and concluded that gas produced 5.6 pounds of carbon dioxide each hour, compared to 11 pounds for charcoal. To prevent waste disposal issues, like explosions at resource recovery facilities and



illegal dumping, empty gas tanks can now be traded in and refilled, and gas barbeques can be hooked up directly to the house's natural gas supply.

Most charcoal briquettes on the market are made from sawdust and a binder such as corn starch. Some also include lighter fluid in the briquettes. When burned, charcoal produces air pollutants including carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that form smog. Lighter fluid and self-starting coals also emit VOCs. Once lit, charcoal continues to burn until all the coals are spent, resulting in continued air emissions. "Real," "natural" or "lump" charcoal is another type of charcoal that is made from wood. It usually does not have chemicals added, so it is better in that sense, but it still contributes to air pollution. If you do choose charcoal, try using a "chimney" instead of lighter fluid to start the fire — a metal cylinder where you place charcoal and crumpled pieces of newspaper.

Summer's short, so go out and enjoy BBQs and campfires with the environment in mind (and save a s'more for me).

*Eartha*

Eartha answers selected environmental questions. Email your question to [judith.prill@ct.gov](mailto:judith.prill@ct.gov) and watch future issues for your answer.

# P 2 C A L E N D A R

## A SELECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS



Check out the **Bike-to-Work Breakfast Events** being held on various dates and locations throughout Connecticut. More information: [www.bikewalkct.org/bike-to-work.html](http://www.bikewalkct.org/bike-to-work.html)

### **Saturday, August 4th** **Tour des Farms Bike Ride**

*Bishop's Orchards Farm Market, Branford & Guilford*

Tour will include stops at local farms, gardens and more in Branford and Guilford. A Connecticut musician will perform at each stop along the way. More information at [www.ctfolk.com/tour.html](http://www.ctfolk.com/tour.html).

### **Thursday, August 9th**

#### **Compost Tea and Air Spading**

*Rye Country Day School, Rye, NY*

Workshop will cover creating an organic program for your business or institution and benefits and costs of compost tea brewing, along with demonstrations of tea applications and air spading. Register at: [www.organiclandcare.net](http://www.organiclandcare.net).

### **Saturday & Sunday, August 11th and 12th**

#### **45th Annual Sharon Audubon Festival**

*Sharon Audubon Center, Sharon*

Two days of nature walks and presentations, live animals, exhibits, vendors, and food! More information: <http://sharon.audubon.org/>

**Need advice on the "greenest" sunscreen? Check the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep database:**

<http://breakingnews.ewg.org/2012sunscreen/>

### **Saturday, September 8th** **2012 Folk Festival and Green Expo** *Edgerton Park, New Haven*

This festival connects people who are interested in making a positive difference in both their lives and in their communities through environmental initiatives and activities, and through the social advocacy of traditional and contemporary roots music. More information at [www.ctfolk.com/ctff/greenexpo.html](http://www.ctfolk.com/ctff/greenexpo.html)

### **Sunday, September 9th** **2012 Celebration of Connecticut Farms** *Ashlawn Farm, Lyme*

Celebrate local food from Connecticut farms and restaurants – hosted this year at the Ashlawn Family Farm, which includes a coffee roasting plant. More information: [www.ctfarmland.org/celebration.html](http://www.ctfarmland.org/celebration.html)

### **Sunday, September 16th –** **Saturday, September 22nd**

#### **Farm-to-Chef Week**

*Locations throughout Connecticut*

Restaurants, institutions, caterers, schools, farms, wineries, and farmers' markets will create their own special Farm-to-Chef menus featuring Connecticut Grown ingredients in each dish. More information: 860-713-2558 or [www.ct.gov/doag](http://www.ct.gov/doag)

For videos on pollution prevention, state parks and forests, recycling, and much more, visit [www.youtube.com/CTDEEPvideos](http://www.youtube.com/CTDEEPvideos)



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