

Hertz to recycle all its tires

November 6 2012, by Jim Motavalli

Do you have any idea what happens to the tires when you junk your car? I didn't think so. What about the 1.2 million tires on the 300,000 cars that are in the Hertz rental car fleet at any one time? I didn't think you had the answer there, either.

I thought you'd be pleased to learn that not only do up to 90 percent of America's [tires](#) get recycled, and made into products as diverse as playground mulch and [landfill](#) bedding, but Hertz has just signed an agreement with the largest [recycler](#) to recover the material from the worn-out tires that leave its fleet every year - an estimated 170,000 of them.

"We're the first rental company to commit to zero waste for tires," said Hertz spokesman Rich Broome. "We recently went through our operations to see where we could do better environmentally, and we are recovering oil and we don't [waste water](#), either. Our tire recycling was at best haphazard. We didn't know what the local operators were doing with them. But because of our agreement with Liberty Tire Recycling, no Hertz tire will ever be landfilled again."

Jeff Kendall, CEO of Pittsburgh-based Liberty, says that his company processes 140 million passenger tire equivalents every year, amounting to 1.4 million tons of material. Used rubber isn't worth all that much, so Hertz doesn't get paid for its surplus tires, but it does acquire peace of mind.

According to the EPA, America generates 290 million scrap tires

annually, and 233 million of them make it to a market. Some 130 million are used as fuel, and 53 million go into civil engineering projects.

So what will happens to Hertz' tires? Kendall explains a few uses:

- Landfills and roads. Instead of being tossed away, ground-up tires can be used to replace sand and gravel as landfill linings. They can also be used for road foundations.
- Burning rubber. As one- or two-inch chips, used tires become Tire Derived Fuel (TDF), which can be burned as fuel at paper mills and cement kilns. "It's a substitute for coal that burns cleaner," Kendall said. "We can also shred it further and remove the steel wire and recycle that."
- Make more mulch. Ground further, as one-eighth-inch chips, tires become mulch that is sold at Sam's Club, Costco and Walmart. Some 150 million pounds of it is created every year. Used in playgrounds, it has the advantage of not washing away and absorbing falls better than other choices.
- Turf battle. Competing with artificial turf, crumb rubber has a wide application. It also can be used to make welcome mats, undercarpet materials and other useful things. Carmakers, including Ford, use reclaimed rubber in parts, including floor mats.
- Working on the railroad. Composite crossties are replacing preservative-dosed hardwood. The Chicago Transit Authority is using the new ties on its Blue Line, and enabling faster speeds.

"Another big coming use is to mix our crumb recycled tire rubber with liquid asphalt for a quieter, better-draining road," Kendall said.

Hertz has 3,000 locations, including both airport and off-airport. That's a lot of tires. It's good to know they're going to a good home. This is not your grandpa's rental-car industry. It's greening with a vengeance, renting electric cars, adopting car sharing and more.

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