



Fuel and Oil Good Practice

Pollution Prevention - actionSHEET 7

If you store or use diesel, petrol, oil or other petroleum products on your site, it is really important that you consider the effects these activities may have on the environment.

What sort of things cause pollution?

Poor work practices or problems with storage and handling can lead to pollution from petroleum products getting into our waterways via the stormwater system or flowing overland.

Wash down water from vehicles can also contain oil and other chemicals. This must be handled appropriately to stop it getting into the waterways (see actionSHEET 2 – Vehicle and Equipment Washing).

Some causes of oil pollution are:

- Materials being flushed down stormwater drains by mistake.
- Spills in refuelling and decanting areas not being cleaned up or being washed away.
- Failure to maintain and clean interceptor systems.
- Poor storage of products in uncovered and/or unbanded containers.
- Contaminated wash water draining into stormwater drains.

If you can see a 'rainbow' sheen in your stormwater sump, it is very likely that there is oil or fuel in it.

How can my waste pollute the environment?

Oil is a common cause of water pollution and even a small amount has a significant effect on plants and animals. It can also make water unfit for drinking or irrigation.

Any material or waste that is left uncovered or on the ground outside can flow or be washed by rainwater into a nearby stormwater drain. Once in the stormwater system it will flow out into local streams or the coast and cause pollution. When discharged, these substances can cause harm to the environment by:

- Poisoning animals and plant;
- Smothering small aquatic plants and animals and destroying where they live;
- Preventing light from entering the water, making it difficult for animals to find food and for plants to get energy from the sun;
- Irritating and clogging the gills of fish;
- Causing a build up of chemicals in the bodies of plants and animals, affecting their long term health and making them unsuitable for human consumption.

Even a very small quantity of a pollutant, or just one accidental discharge, can drastically alter the quality of a stream. Fish, insects and plants can be killed and habitats destroyed. A waterway can take years to recover.

You may think that your little bit of waste can't harm the environment, but combine it with the waste produced by others doing the same sorts of things and it adds up to a significant amount of pollution occurring in Southland every day of the year. The cumulative effects of combined discharges cause serious damage to our environment and must be prevented.



Incorrectly stored fuel can lead to pollution getting washed into nearby stormwater drains and streams.



It is illegal to cause pollution

In New Zealand the Resource Management Act 1991 is the law that protects our environment. It makes every person responsible for ensuring that their activities and those of their employees do not pollute our environment.

Specifically, it is illegal to allow any substance to enter water either directly, through the stormwater system or via the contamination of land without prior authorisation from Environment Southland.

Environment Southland is committed to caring for our environment and is responsible for both helping the residents of our region to prevent pollution and enforcing the Resource Management Act if necessary. By making a few simple changes to your site and daily practices, you can help contribute to a pollution-free environment that everyone can enjoy, both now and in the future.

Play it safe

You can stop pollution from your activities

Cleaning up

- Make sure you and your staff know how to use spill kits properly.
- Use diatomaceous earth or "kitty litter" to absorb small spills, before sweeping them up and disposing to landfill.
- Use bunds and absorbents to control larger spills and contact Environment Southland if a large spill occurs.
- NEVER use detergents on areas that drain to your interceptor as they will prevent it from working effectively.

Handling and storage

- If you are collecting or storing used/waste oil in bulk tanks you may also need to get HSNO certification for the tanks to verify they are safe.
- Use good storage practices such as bunding, specialist decanting areas and locate spill kits close to areas of risk such as tanks.
- Follow strict practices to prevent spills while loading, unloading and transferring materials.
- Store waste oil securely and remove it regularly.
- Dispose of vehicle wash water through the sewer system or have it removed by a reputable liquid waste contractor.
- Install oil interceptors to cover drainage from any areas involving refuelling or storage.
- Use lockable valves to prevent contaminated water being discharged from your bunds.
- Ensure all tanks and secondary containments meet HSNO requirements and are regularly maintained (and certified).
- Keep all areas exposed to rainfall clean, and keep all wastes out of stormwater drains.



ALWAYS have a good Spill Response Procedure. Keep spill equipment handy and make sure your staff are well trained.

Environment Southland can help your company develop a Spill Response Procedure and provide guidance on these matters. Call 0800 76 88 45 and ask to speak to a Pollution Prevention Officer.



A bunded and covered area for storing used oil.

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Further Information

For a copy of the **Pollution Prevention Guide** or more information on pollution prevention, contact Environment Southland, telephone 03 211 5115 or 0800 76 88 45 or visit our website at www.es.govt.nz.