



## Painting and Plastering Waste

### Pollution Prevention - actionSHEET 6

*If you are involved in painting, sanding, plastering or any other activities using paint, solvents or adhesives, it is really important that you consider the effects these activities may have on the environment, before you begin.*

### What sort of things cause pollution?

Poor work practices while sanding, painting or plastering houses or other buildings are responsible for some common problems:

- Blockage of stormwater grates and drains with waste material
- Contaminated wash water draining into stormwater drains
- Stains or coloured marks on the ground, in gutters or on stormwater grates
- Poor storage of products or wastes in uncovered containers resulting in spills and overflows that pollute stormwater
- Solvent smells or coloured water in stormwater drains.

### How can my waste pollute the environment?

Any material or waste that is left uncovered or on the ground outside can flow or be washed by rain into a nearby stormwater drain. Stormwater drains discharge into local streams or to the coast. Any waste material that gets into the stormwater system will end up polluting these environments.

Waste paints, paint thinners and plasters contain a number of substances that can pollute our environment. These include toxic solvents, heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, chromium and mercury, and suspended solids.

When discharged, these substances can cause harm to the environment by:

- Poisoning animals and plants
- 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
- Chemicals building up in the bodies of plants and animals, causing long-term health effects or rendering them unfit 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.**

### 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 your activities causing pollution

#### Cleaning up

- Recycle unwanted paint through recycling schemes such as Resene's Paintwise ([www.paintwise.co.nz](http://www.paintwise.co.nz)) or using Dulux's Take Back scheme for trade painters ([www.dulux.co.nz/applicator/sustainability](http://www.dulux.co.nz/applicator/sustainability)).
- Clean up paint chips and dust from sanding and dispose of them in a bin.
- Leave excess paints with property owners for touch-ups.
- For special paints such as old lead-based, solvent based, industrial or special purpose paints, contact your Pollution Prevention Officer at Environment Southland for advice.
- Clean up all spilled materials immediately and dispose of waste into a bin, ensuring that it won't leak out.
- Remember that waste solvents can be reused.
- Process for water based paints only:
  1. At the end of the job, wipe or squeeze excess paint onto an absorbent material, such as old rags, shredded newspapers or cardboard boxes.
  2. Allow to dry and dispose of with general solid waste.
  3. Wash brushes, rollers and other equipment with water well away from waterways, drains and gutters. Use a large bucket or similar container.
  4. Transfer the washed equipment to a second container filled with clean water for a final rinse.
  5. Place lids on the containers or cover in some other secure manner and stand overnight. This allows for the paint solids to sink to the bottom.
  6. In the morning, slowly pour the clear water from the first container onto the lawn where it can be absorbed into the ground. Stop just before you reach paint solids.
  7. The paint solids can now be left to dry and then disposed of with other solid waste.
  8. The second container (containing the rinse water) now becomes the first container.
  9. Use this rotation system until the job is complete.

#### Handling and storage

- Always use drip trays when transferring or draining paints and other liquids.
- Allow paint thinners to settle, then strain out the waste solids and reuse the liquid.
- Store all paints, thinners and other liquids under cover to prevent rainfall washing out pollutants.
- If liquids must be stored outside, keep lids and caps on containers and store them in a secure area so they can't be tampered with.
- Keep all areas exposed to rainfall clean, and keep all wastes out of stormwater drains.

#### Purchasing

- Look out for paints and products that are labelled as low VOC or VOC free. These contain less, or none, of the volatile organic compounds, which can cause health issues for some people.
- Look into using water-based paints rather than solvent or oil-based paints, where possible. There are now water-based enamels on the market.



**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.

Published by:

Environment Southland  
 Corner North Road & Price St  
 Private Bag 90116  
 Invercargill 9840

January 2013

## 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](http://www.es.govt.nz).