



REDUCING STORMWATER POLLUTION FROM CONSTRUCTION SITES

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Clean stormwater helps keep our creeks, rivers and lakes, beaches and oceans healthy. Keeping our stormwater clean also provides us with new opportunities for stormwater harvesting and reuse. This helps us to protect our precious water reserves.

The construction and building industry has a role in reducing stormwater pollution by not allowing litter and pollution to wash off site into the stormwater drain.

An unprotected building site runs a high risk of sediment (soil, sand, gravel and concrete washings) and other pollution (litter, spilled fuel and paint) entering the stormwater system.

Why is stormwater pollution a problem?

The stormwater system is the gutters, street drains and pipes that collect rainwater and carry it to the nearest creek or river.

This water is not treated to remove litter, debris and other pollution before it reaches our waterways.

The litter, sediment and other pollutants (such as paint) that wash off building sites can kill or damage aquatic plants and animals and ultimately wash up on our beaches. Your waste can also block drains, causing flooding and expensive repair bills for councils and landowners.

The stormwater system is not the sewer. The sewerage system collects waste from sinks, bathrooms and toilets and carries it to a treatment plant. Businesses need a trade waste agreement with their local water authority to discharge waste into the sewage system.

Why should I reduce pollution from my site?

Stormwater pollution is a major environmental problem

Stormwater pollution is the major threat to Port Phillip Bay and all the things that Melbourne enjoys about the Bay. Don't let your business be part of the problem.

To make your site safer.

A clean, well organised site is a safer site.

How can I reduce pollution on my building site?

Prepare your workplace

- Educate you staff about preventing stormwater pollution.
- Plan your site's layout. Identify the lowest point on your site: this is where all water will drain to. Keep stockpiles and vehicle crossovers as far from the lowest point as possible.
- Reduce mud being carried offsite. Install a gravel or crushed-rock driveway to provide clean access for delivery vehicles. Locate stockpiles nearby. Remove any mud from tyres with a shovel before they leave the site and shovel any mud that goes on the road back onto the site.
- Use a litter bin with a lid. Make sure everyone on site uses the bin. Keep the lid closed and empty the bin regularly. You can install several bins and separate your waste for recycling, which will also save on landfill costs.
- Install site fencing. As well as keeping your property safe, this will also help prevent litter from your site being blown away, and potentially into a drain.
- Install sediment fences on all 'downhill' sides of the property. Geotextile fabrics allow water to pass through them, but not sediment, and can prevent huge amounts of soil, sand and other sediment being washed down the drain.

because this is our home



Keep your workplace clean

- Reduce waste. When redeveloping sites, consider whether any of the materials from the old buildings can be reused. When ordering new materials, design to standard sizes to reduce offcut waste and order only what you need. Some suppliers will take back unused quantities. Using prefabricated products also reduces waste.
- Clean and wash up on site to ensure that paint, thinners, petrochemicals and concrete washings can't reach our waterways.
- Ensure stockpiles are stored on site. Stockpiles should be delivered behind the sediment fences, not on the road, footpath – or on the fence itself.
- Connect downpipes as soon as possible. This will reduce mud after rain and make your site safer. Aim to connect downpipes to stormwater as soon as the roof is on, or use a temporary connection such as flexible tubing.
- Establish a single site for cutting concrete, bricks and other materials. This site should be well away from any stormwater drains, and dust and slurry should be contained.
- Protect stormwater drains with 'gravel sausages'.
- Chemicals, paints, oils and any materials that could wash off site must be stored to stop them getting into stormwater drains.
- Wash vehicles, engines and machinery parts in areas that drain to proper waste facilities.
- Keep machinery maintained, to cut the risk of leaks, and regularly cleaned so that any leaks can be seen quickly.
- Use spill trays under work areas where a spill could occur.

- Control airborne sprays so they cannot land on surfaces where rain will wash them down the drain.
- Minimise the waste stored on your site. Check all containers regularly for leaks and safe storage.

Minimise the risk of an accident

- Safe handling and storage to prevent pollution is part of the job for all staff.
- Make a plan to deal with spills. Involve staff in this planning. Do not hose spills down the drain – if the spill gets into the stormwater system you may be prosecuted for pollution.
- Get a spill kit and train staff to use it. A spill kit should include:
 - protective clothing
 - absorbing and cleaning agents – sand, sawdust, absorbents pads/pellets, 'kitty litter', mops, brooms and rags
 - portable bunds ('sausage' barriers similar to sandbags) to direct spills or wash-water away from drains to clean-up areas
 - shovels, brooms and dustpans to sweep up solid or powder spills.

For more information about protecting our stormwater and maintaining a stormwater friendly construction site:

- *Preventing stormwater pollution – a guide for industry* (Publication 928, October 2003)
- *Doing it right on subdivisions – temporary environmental protection measures for subdivision construction sites* (Publication 960, October 2004).

These publications are available for download in PDF format by going to the EPA Victoria website at www.epa.vic.gov.au and clicking the 'Publications & Legislation' link.



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