

Toolbox Talk 8 – Water Pollution Control

What is needed?

Any company operational or emergency procedure for preventing and controlling water pollution.

Estimated duration

10 – 15 minutes

The discussion

Working adjacent to rivers, lakes, ponds and aquifers (underground stream) must be carried out with care due to the potential pollution threat it poses.

Contamination into watercourses has an immediate effect on the water and can often be seen readily. It comes from several sources:

- Pollution - oil and chemical spills
- Silting - suspended solids
- Erosion - erosion of soil.

General precautions

Any activities that may have the potential to pollute water should be carried out away from the watercourse or drain, this includes activities such as maintenance and refuelling of plant (30 metres away from a watercourse is a guideline for an ideal situation). When refuelling by hand, use a funnel or a container with a spout to prevent a spillage.

Silt and cement

When cleaning any concrete mixing plant dirty water should not be pumped directly into drains and must not be allowed to flow into any watercourse, it may be necessary to establish settlement lagoons for this type of contaminated water.

The placing of concrete mixers or wet concrete within close proximity to a watercourse must be avoided to prevent any contamination.

Silty water must not be pumped directly into watercourses as it can be extremely damaging to plant and animal life in the water. If silty water is produced, the following are examples of the kind of steps that should be taken:

- Sandbags can be placed around surface water drains and water gullies to prevent dirty water entering a watercourse
- Settlement tanks and lagoons can be used to settle out the silt particles. Clean water can then be discharged into a watercourse providing permission is granted
- Diversion of clean rain waters or surface water away from unmade ground will avoid the creation of silty water
- The discharge of silty waters to the foul sewer may be an acceptable way of dealing with silty water providing permission is granted from the appropriate authorities.



Fuel and chemicals

All fuel and chemical storage must be adequately banded and situated 30 metres away from the watercourse. Any fuel or chemical spills should be reported immediately to your supervisor. Leaking or empty drums or containers should be disposed of in the correct manner.

Erosion

Where possible clean water should be pumped directly into the watercourse and not over exposed soil. If this is not possible, pumping onto grassy areas before allowing run off into the water will reduce potential erosion that may occur.

General points

- When disturbing ground water near to watercourses, beware of increasing the load of suspended solids (mud / silt particles)
- When temporarily storing contaminated soil, think about the consequences that may arise if there is a flood or a heavy storm
- During periods of dry weather, considerable quantities of dirt and oils can build up on areas of hard standing. If these areas are not cleaned regularly a sudden spell of bad weather can wash these contaminants into watercourses resulting in high pollution loads
- When connecting up to existing drains, do not connect appliances requiring foul drainage to surface water drains
- Do not allow wheel wash facilities to overflow.

By taking notice of these precautions chances of pollution occurring are minimised, thus decreasing the likelihood of prosecution and environmental degradation. Should a problem occur, the responsible manager should be informed immediately.

Discussion point

Have an open discussion about the current controls on-site.

Training register

Date

Name of attendee

Signature

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