

Water management and pollution prevention

Construction work can cause serious harm to watercourses. Pollution can contaminate drinking water, suffocate fish (by removing essential oxygen from the water) and kill plants, animals and insects living in the water.

A construction site does not need to be next to a watercourse to cause a problem: pollutants entering a surface water drain can end up in a watercourse miles away.

Mitigation and monitoring processes are essential components in ensuring that watercourses are protected. Mitigation takes the form of having the necessary preventative measures in place. Monitoring ensures that these measures are working efficiently.



Vehicle wheels being inspected and washed before leaving site

Essential points to consider

- Identify all watercourses and existing site drainage systems (surface and foul), and clearly mark them on site plans. Contact the appropriate local flood authorities or environmental agency to agree all works near watercourses.
- Make sure that all discharges to streams, ditches and drainage systems have been consented to by the relevant environmental agency, and – where required – all water abstractions from rivers, ponds, lakes or water mains have been consented to by the relevant environmental agency.
- Locate all fuel, oil and chemical tanks as far as possible from drains and watercourses, on impermeable surfaces to avoid ground contamination. Make sure that they are marked with the type of contents, volume and appropriate hazard warning signs.
- Any bunds that are used for storage of multiple containers of fuel, oil and chemicals must be at least 110% of the capacity of the largest container, or 25% of the combined capacity for drums.
- Designate areas for concrete lorries to wash out away from watercourses and drains, and protect all watercourses and existing drainage systems from run-off and silty water.
- Consider proactive measures to reduce water consumption (such as greywater recycling) and water-saving devices (such as waterless urinals and triggers on water hoses).
- At site inductions, make site personnel aware of controls for water management and pollution prevention, and of the site's spillage response procedures.
- Ensure that adequate numbers of spill kits are available, and that there are the appropriate numbers of personnel trained to deal with any accidental spillages on the ground, into drains and into watercourses, as well as to deal with wastewater on site.
- Make sure that plant nappies are used during refuelling on site, to prevent ground contamination or pollution by fuels, oils, chemicals, paints and other such substances.
- Ensure that water discharges are properly treated (by using settlement tanks or lagoons), and that water monitoring procedures are put in place to make sure that discharges are of the correct quality.
- Make sure that water meters are fitted to measure water usage, and that water consumption is being monitored, recorded and communicated to site personnel to promote the minimisation of water use.

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