

# Water Pollution Prevention



Tips to protect water quality and keep your food service facility clean



## Your Business Affects Water Quality

Your business affects water quality in creeks, the Delta and Bay through two different systems — the storm drain system and the sanitary sewer system. The storm drain system, comprised of gutters, pipes, creeks and ditches, carries water directly to creeks, the Bay and Delta.

Only rainwater belongs in the storm drain system, but pollutants enter it in many ways. For example, you're polluting if you wash greasy equipment in your parking lot, or leave grease, food waste or other pollutants on outdoor surfaces where they can be washed into storm drains with the rain. Outdoor pollutants that don't wash into the storm drain system can soak into the ground and reach the groundwater.

The sanitary sewer system carries wastewater (mostly from indoor plumbing) to a sewage treatment plant before the treated water discharges to the Bay or Delta. Although the water is treated, not all pollutants can be removed, and some pollutants disrupt the treatment system or clog sanitary sewer pipes. Grease, toxic chemicals, pesticides and acids are examples of problem pollutants for the sanitary sewer, or the water body into which the treated wastewater is discharged.

Pollution from many small sources adds up to big pollution problems. That's why the Contra Costa Clean Water Program (The Program) has developed this brochure along with the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (Central San) and the City of Concord to provide clean water solutions for your food service facility.

The Program serves Contra Costa cities and the county in their effort to radically reduce or eliminate pollutants from entering storm drain systems. Central San and other sewerage agencies treat wastewater for county residents. These agencies, along with other valuable contacts, are listed at the back of this brochure as resources for further information.



## You Benefit from Preventing Water Pollution

The practices in this brochure benefit your business and water quality. These practices help you avoid clogged sewer lines and sewer back-ups, help prevent pest problems and make your business more attractive for customers. They also reduce your liability. If you pollute the storm drain or sanitary sewer systems, you can be fined as much as \$10,000 per day and \$10 per gallon of discharge.



## Your Role in Keeping Our Water Clean

As the owner, manager or team leader, you're responsible for setting a good example for your employees. It's important you understand the pollution prevention practices in this brochure and make sure your employees do too.

We ask you to:

- Read this brochure and make any needed changes to your equipment and practices.
- Assign someone on each shift to make sure the practices are being followed.
- Make sure any cleaning services or other contractors you hire also follow these guidelines; your business can be held liable if your contractor pollutes.
- Know where your drains go. Generally inside drains go to the sanitary sewer, and outside drains go to a storm drain system. Hire a plumbing contractor to check your drains to make sure. Always use the sanitary sewer drains for wash water. Be sure to label the drains for your employees.
- Contact the agencies listed at the back of this brochure if you have questions.
- Call 1-800 NO DUMPING (1-800-663-8674) to report any illegal dumping to storm and sanitary sewer drains.

## Tip 1 Provide Training

On-going employee training is essential since preventing pollution depends on everyday actions such as sweeping up litter.

- Train new employees about pollution prevention and why it matters. Review pollution prevention practices with current employees at least four times a year. Document training events and who attended.
- Display the “Tips” poster to remind you and your employees what to do daily. Also, post reminder signs where specific actions are needed. For exam-

ple, post a sign on your grease recycling container that says, “Keep lid closed”.

- Post your spill control plan. (See Tip 5.)
- Stencil storm drains on or near your property with a “Drains to Bay” message. Call your local municipality to get stenciling materials.



## Tip 2 Keep Dumpster Area Clean

Leaky or overflowing dumpsters, garbage cans, and tallow bins are common pollution sources from food service facilities. Follow these steps to keep litter, grease, leftover food and other pollutants under control, so they don't wind up in our storm drain system. These steps also help control pests and keep your business attractive.

- Sweep the dumpster area daily. Don't use soap or bleach for clean-up (unless you have a covered dumpster area that drains to the sanitary sewer and is bermed or otherwise separated from storm water); see Tip 3 regarding outdoor cleaning.
- Always keep dumpster and other container lids closed. If possible, lock the dumpster to prevent illegal dumping.
- Provide plenty of trash and recycling containers for customer use, and empty them into appropriate containers frequently. If your container over-

flows, get a bigger one or arrange for more frequent collection. Ask your waste hauler how to arrange for separate containers for recyclable materials such as glass and cardboard.

- Bag and seal food waste before putting it in your dumpster. Don't dump liquid waste (grease, fluids) into dumpsters or garbage cans, and don't hose them out to a storm drain.
- Check your dumpster for leaks. If it leaks, tell your waste hauler, and ask for a leak-free dumpster.
- Consider building a roof over your dumpster area, placing a berm around it, providing hot and cold water nearby, and draining the area to the sanitary sewer. Call your city, wastewater district, and County Health Department to learn about construction requirements.



## Tip 3 Clean Outdoor Areas Without Polluting

You're polluting if you clean outdoor areas in ways that wash soapy water, oil, grease, and other pollutants to the ground or storm drain system. Any chemicals left on outdoor surfaces can be carried into the storm drain system by the rain. Follow these cleaning practices to prevent water pollution.

- Sweep paved outdoor areas regularly. Place litter in a trash container.
- Never use bleaches, degreasers or detergents for outdoor cleaning (except in an area that you know drains to the sanitary sewer). Do not apply liquid or powder deodorizers to outside surfaces. Even products labeled "biodegradable" or "environmentally safe" can be harmful to fish and wildlife.
- Use absorbent materials to clean spilled grease, oil and any other harmful fluids. Place used absorbent materials in sealed bags before proper, final disposal.
- If you must use water for outdoor cleaning, use a mop and bucket and empty the bucket at a drain connected to the sanitary sewer. If the water is greasy, be sure the drain is connected to a grease removal device.
- If you must hose off an area, sweep it first and avoid or block off any storm drains (such as by placing a specially designed heavy rubber mat over the inlet). Contain the wash water (such as with a portable berm), collect it with a wet vacuum or sump pump,



and discharge it to the sanitary sewer connected to a grease removal device.

- Require any outdoor cleaning company you hire to follow these guidelines. Review their practices before and after you hire them, since you can be held liable for any pollution they cause. You can get a list of environmentally certified surface cleaners from the Program.
- For a complete set of outdoor cleaning guidelines, call the Program 1-800-NO DUMPING (925-313-2360).

## Tip 4 Clean It Right

Clean equipment in ways that prevent pollutants from reaching the storm drain system.

- When cleaning indoor floors, don't sweep or use a hose or squeegee to send food waste and/or floor cleaning wastewater to the outdoors. Do not dump mop water in parking lots, storm drains or other outdoor areas.
- Do not clean floor mats in the dishwasher. (The health code doesn't allow it.)
- Clean equipment such as floor mats, exhaust filters, and garbage cans in a mop sink

outfitted with a grease removal device. Or, clean equipment in an outdoor area that is covered, bermed, and connected to the sanitary sewer and a grease removal device. If you need to construct an outdoor wash area, call the Health Department and your city and local wastewater agency for construction requirements.

- If you hire a surface cleaning service, make sure they follow the guidelines in this booklet.



## Tip 5 Clean Up Spills

Contain and clean spills quickly to prevent potentially serious problems.

- Prevent spills. For example, store supplies where they will not get knocked over, keep containers tightly closed, and organize your delivery area.
- Develop a spill control plan that covers spill prevention and include clean-up and disposal instructions for the different types of spills you might have.
- Assign trained employees to manage spill clean-up.
- Buy or assemble a spill clean-up kit or kits with materials and instructions for the different types of potential spills. Assign someone to keep the kit well stocked, and keep clean-up materials clearly marked and readily accessible.

- Stop any spill at the source. Keep it from spreading by placing absorbent material around it.
- Use dry methods first for spill cleanup, such as sweeping or using absorbents or rags.
- If necessary (and appropriate considering the spill), use water to clean the spill. It's best to use a mop and bucket. If the spill isn't hazardous, oily, or otherwise a problem, dispose of the mop water down one of your sanitary sewer drains. When in doubt, call your wastewater agency. If you want to wash an outdoor spill, see Tip 3 for advice on collecting and properly disposing the wash water.



## Tip 6 Keep Grease Out of Drains

These practices can drastically reduce the chance of clogging your drains with food and grease.

- Scrape plates thoroughly into a separate container before rinsing them to reduce grease and food buildup and blockage in your drain line and in grease traps, interceptors and sewers. (See Tip 8 for an explanation of grease traps and interceptors.) If possible, collect food waste separately from other garbage for use as compost or animal feed. Call your local garbage or recycling company for information.
- Donate leftover edible food to the Contra Costa Food Bank. Call (925) 676-7543 for more information.

- Install screens and solid traps in sink and floor drains to catch larger solids. Clean these screens and traps frequently.
- Don't try to "dissolve" grease by adding hot water or chemicals (emulsifiers). This will not solve the problem because it will only temporarily break up the grease and send it further down your sewer lines.



## Tip 7 Recycle Grease and Oil

Manage grease recycling to minimize problems.

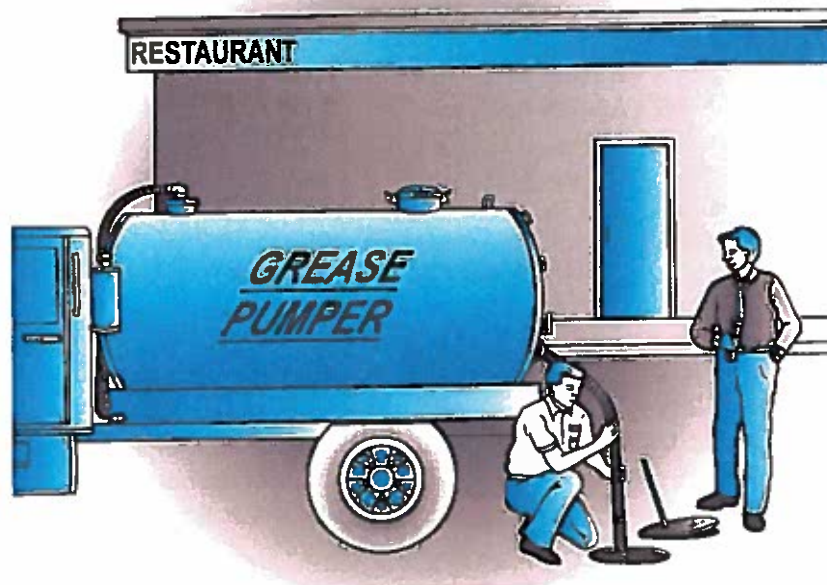
- Recycle cooking grease and oil. Use tallow bins or sealed containers with tamper-proof lids.
- Keep containers closed except when adding oil or grease.
- Keep the exterior of grease recycling containers clean.
- Avoid spills. Spilled grease is hard to clean up and can wash into the storm drain system.
- Check for leaks. Ask your recycler for a leak-free tallow bin, and replace any leaky grease containers.
- If you store grease containers outside, keep them under a roof, if possible.



## Tip 8 Install and Maintain Grease Removal Devices

Many food service facilities have grease removal devices to keep grease out of drain lines and the sanitary sewer system. There are two types: grease traps and grease interceptors. **Grease traps** are box-shaped devices which are typically installed on or below the floor under a sink; they retain grease from one to four plumbing fixtures. **Grease interceptors** are large, outdoor, underground concrete chambers. Both grease traps and interceptors need to be regularly cleaned to keep them working properly. Regular cleaning reduces the chance of clogged drain lines and sewer back-ups. A backed-up sewer is a health code problem and may lead to business closure until the problem is solved.

- Know which indoor drains are connected to a grease removal device, and label them. Always use these drains to dispose of any greasy water.
- Consider installing a grease trap on any indoor drain receiving greasy water. Call a licensed plumber for installation, and call the Health Department, your city, and your wastewater agency regarding permit and sizing requirements.
- If you have a grease trap, make sure your dishwasher isn't connected to it.
- Garbage grinder use is discouraged. If you have one, it should



- only be connected to a grease interceptor. Eliminating use of a garbage grinder will reduce interceptor cleaning costs.
- Maintain easy access to your grease removal devices. Don't store things in front of or on top of your grease trap or block access to your grease interceptor with landscaping.
- Regularly inspect your grease removal devices and clean them as needed. Cleaning frequency depends on the device capacity and how much grease is in your wastewater (see Tip #6 on how to reduce grease).
- Make sure your grease trap and interceptor service company has a county hauling license. Know where they dispose of your grease.
- Supervise grease trap and interceptor service companies or inspect their work after it is done. Make sure they completely pump out grease and all liquids. Ask for a written receipt and a copy of the manifest showing where the grease was taken (so you know they disposed of it legally). Don't pay them until you have the manifest and are satisfied with the work.
- Keep written maintenance records on site for at least three years.



## Tip 9 Use Water-Friendly Products

Oven cleaners, disinfectants, and other cleaning products often contain toxic chemicals. Reduce your use of hazardous materials and you'll automatically reduce the personal, environmental and health risks associated with them.

- Buy the least toxic products available. Look for labels that say non-toxic, but understand the product may still be harmful to fish or wildlife.
- Avoid chlorinated compounds, petroleum distillates, phenols, formaldehyde, and caustic or acidic products.
- Don't assume "biodegradable" products are safe. Biodegradable means the product will eventually break down, but may harm the environment in the meantime.
- Use water-based cleaning products whenever possible.



## Tip 10 Minimize Pesticide Risks

Pesticides are showing up in our creeks, the Bay, and sanitary sewers, at levels toxic to sensitive organisms. Restaurants and other food service facilities contribute to this problem, so it's important you manage pests in ways to minimize environmental risks.

- Prevent pest problems by storing food in pest-proof containers, keeping things clean and dry, fixing any plumbing leaks, and caulking cracks which allow ants and cockroaches to enter.
- Apply pesticides only if necessary, not on a regular schedule.
- If you apply pesticides, follow all label directions. Don't apply pesticides around floor drains, sinks, or food.
- For ants, use ant baits with boric acid, hydramethylnon, or arsenic (ants carry the food to the nest, killing the whole colony). Remove bait when the ants are gone, or else the bait may attract more ants.
- For cockroaches, apply boric acid powder (e.g. Roach Prufe<sup>®</sup>) where they hide (in cracks, under the refrigerator, but never where food is handled). Apply a fine dusting of dehydrating dust (horticultural grade Diatomaceous earth) to cockroach walkways.
- When hiring a pesticide applicator, look for someone who practices integrated pest management (IPM). An IPM practitioner will try to solve the problem with the least toxic methods.

