

TOOLBOX TALK

Environmental toolbox talk

About six minutes · Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 34

SITE

DATE

GIVEN BY

WHY IT MATTERS

GOV.UK's pollution prevention guidance for businesses says that if you pollute, you could get an unlimited fine, go to prison for up to five years, or both, and pay the whole cost of the clean-up. It also says it is not only obvious chemicals that pollute. Concrete slurry, silty water and detergents can kill the life in a stream.

A site can pollute a river a mile away through one surface water drain. A split fuel bowser, a mixer washed out by the gate, or water pumped from an excavation straight into the gully is all it takes. Our neighbours live with our dust and noise every day. This talk is about keeping what belongs on site, on site.

GOV.UK, Defra and Environment Agency, Pollution prevention for businesses

THE POINTS TO MAKE

- ☐ **What counts as pollution**

Pollution is any substance getting into the air, water or ground where it can harm people or wildlife. On site that is fuel and oil, concrete and cement washout, silty water from excavations and stockpiles, paint and solvent, cleaning chemicals, dust and smoke. Even things that seem harmless, like grout water or detergent, can strip the oxygen from a stream and kill the fish in it.
- ☐ **Fuel, oils and chemicals**

Store fuel, oils and chemicals in bunded tanks or on drip trays, away from drains and watercourses, and locked when not in use. Refuel plant in a set area, on a drip tray, never leaving the nozzle. Check plant for leaks daily. Keep a spill kit, suited to what is stored, beside storage, refuelling and delivery points, and supervise every fuel delivery.
- ☐ **Spills: stop, contain, report**

If something spills, stop the source if it is safe, such as closing a valve or standing a drum up. Contain it with the spill kit: socks around it, mats over drains, pads to soak it up. Then tell the supervisor straight away. If anything has reached a drain, watercourse or soaked into the ground, the Environment Agency is called at once on 0800 80 70 60, day or night, and used spill kit goes as hazardous waste.
- ☐ **Waste and the duty of care**

Everyone who produces or handles waste has a legal duty of care. Keep it on site and contained, separate it, and hand it only to a registered waste carrier, which can be checked on the Environment Agency's register. Each transfer has a written description and a transfer note or electronic record, kept for two years, or three for hazardous waste. Never burn waste on site.
- ☐ **Know your drains**

Surface water drains carry rainwater straight to a river, a stream or a soakaway, with no treatment. Foul drains go to a sewage works. The usual code is blue manhole covers for surface water and red for foul. Learn which is which on this site from the drain plan. Nothing but clean rainwater goes down a surface water drain, and nothing at all goes down one without asking.
- ☐ **Concrete and dirty water**

Wash out mixers, pumps and tools only in the washout area, never into a drain, a gully or onto open ground. Water pumped from excavations is muddy and goes through a settlement tank or lagoon, not into the nearest drain. Keep water out of excavations with cut-off ditches or covers. Cover or protect stockpiles of soil and sand so wind and rain do not carry them off.
- ☐ **Neighbours: dust and noise**

Dust from cutting, sweeping and haul roads settles on cars, washing and lungs next door. Damp it down, use extraction or wet cutting, sheet loads, and keep roads and wheel washes clean. Keep to the site's working hours, switch off plant that is not working, and point noisy kit away from homes. The local council can serve a notice on noisy construction work.

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TOOLBOX TALK, CONTINUED

Environmental toolbox talk: do, do not, and the questions

DO

- Find out which drains on this site are surface water and which are foul.
- Refuel only in the set area, on a drip tray, and stay with the nozzle.
- Keep a spill kit at fuel stores, refuelling points and deliveries, and know how to use it.
- Wash out concrete only in the washout area, and pump dirty water through the settlement tank.
- Damp down dust and switch off plant that is not working.
- Put waste in the right skip and report any skip that is overflowing or leaking.

DO NOT

- Do not put anything but clean rainwater down a surface water drain.
- Do not wash out mixers, tools or paint brushes into a drain, gully or open ground.
- Do not pump water from an excavation straight into a drain or watercourse.
- Do not leave fuel or chemical containers open, unbanded or near a drain.
- Do not burn waste or let anyone take it who cannot show they are a registered carrier.
- Do not keep a spill quiet, however small.

ASK THE TEAM

- ? Where are the surface water drains on this site, and where do they go?
- ? Where are the spill kits, and when were they last restocked?
- ? Where do we wash out concrete and where does the water from the excavations go?
- ? Who takes our waste away, and how do we know they are registered?
- ? What do the neighbours complain about most, and what can we change?

TO CLOSE

What leaves this site through a drain, a cloud of dust or a skip is still our responsibility. A spill that takes a minute to contain can take months to clean out of a river, and the fine has no limit. So know your drains, keep fuel banded and spill kits ready, wash out only where it is collected, keep the dust and noise down for the neighbours, and send waste only with a registered carrier. If something gets out, stop it, contain it and tell us straight away.

Record it. Who gave the talk, where, when, who was there and what was raised. The last page is the record.

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Environmental toolbox talk: given and understood

Each person signs on the day to say they were present and understood the talk. Anyone who joins the team later is given the talk before starting, and signs here.

SITE	DATE	TIME	GIVEN BY
NAME	COMPANY	TRADE OR ROLE	SIGNATURE

QUESTIONS RAISED, AND THE ANSWERS GIVEN	ACTIONS AGREED, WHO AND BY WHEN	
TALK GIVEN BY (SIGNATURE)	POSITION	DATE

MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK REGULATIONS 1999, REGULATION 10: INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

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