

# MPCA Sets Sights On Septic Systems

Many of us take for granted the discharge of vehicle wash-water, shop floor waste, rinsewater and other wastewaters to septic systems or to the surface.

How could this practice pose a problem? After all, it's just water, dirt, grass clippings and maybe a little HIP, solvents, gas and oil.

The problem lies in the accumulation of these and other toxins into the soil. Sooner or later they will migrate to ground water and find their way to domestic wells or public waters. When this happens, the party that is found responsible will get tangled up in the nightmare of environmental remediation.

Until now, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) had no specific limits for many toxic constituents found in discharge waters.\*

This may seem strange, but basically the policy was that until a problem manifested itself in soil, wells or public waters, no action was taken.

However, the EPA has given itself until March, 1995 to mandate specific restrictions on wastewater discharge to the MPCA. The MPCA will take these restrictions and either enforce them as is or make them tighter for Minnesota businesses.

For example, "Drinking Water" quality limits are .05 mg/1 (Parts Per Million) Lead, 250 mg/1 for Sodium Chlo-

ride, and .005 mg/1 for Benzene (a common solvent found in gasoline). Image what the limits are for HIP.

There are indications that Drinking Water Standards will be used as a benchmark for discharge of wastewater from industrial sites. This naturally would include golf courses and other businesses in the turf industry.

## Solutions

What regulatory people are telling us is that those businesses using on-site systems of discharging wastewater have several options.

1. Stop washing equipment, floors and vehicles.
2. Capture all of the discharge in a holding tank and have a vendor pump the tank.
3. Capture and recycle the water through some type of treatment equipment.

Regardless of the method that is chosen, remember that anything we do to protect the environment not only improves our quality of life, it can also be used to promote a positive image in the community.

—Scott Ender, Ruffride-Johnson Equipment Co.

\* \* \* \*

\*"Disposal of Industrial Wastewater Alternatives" fact sheets 1-5 are available from the MPCA on request. Contact Gretchen Sabel at (612) 296-0550.

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