

Car Wash and Vehicle Maintenance Facilities



MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

Underground disposal of commercial and industrial wastewater can cause serious soil and groundwater contamination if not carefully controlled. On-site sewage treatment systems are designed to treat household wastewater and do not provide adequate treatment for the types of contaminants found in commercial and industrial facilities. This article provides an overview of the regulations and restrictions concerning the management, treatment and disposal of industrial wastewater in underground sewage systems in Minnesota. Because of the potential for wastewater to contaminate soil and groundwater, the policies and regulations regarding underground disposal systems are strict.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

It is illegal in Minnesota to dispose of any hazardous waste through underground discharge, including septic systems and dry wells. All wastes must be evaluated to determine if they are hazardous. Wastes which meet the definition of a hazardous waste must be managed in accordance with Minnesota's hazardous waste rules.

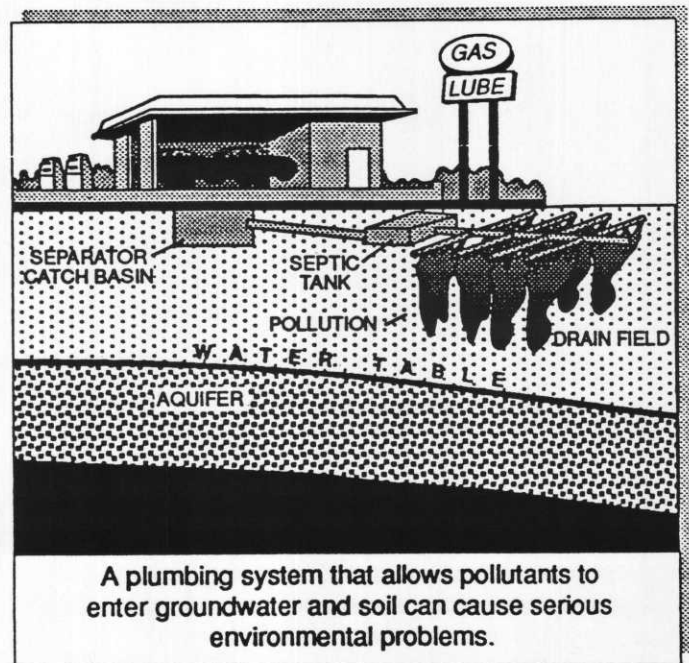
Floor Drains and Shop Sink Connections

Floor drains and shop sinks connected to on-site septic systems or drywells can be pathways for contaminants to reach groundwater sources — especially in vehicle maintenance facilities (as illustrated in the graphic). For this reason, these types of connections will not be allowed. This position is consistent with current federal policy.

Floor drains and shop sinks must be connected to a municipal sewer or holding tanks so that wastes can be treated in a wastewater treatment facility.

Vehicle Wash Wastewater

Discharge of vehicle wash wastewater to an on-site sewage treatment system could result in contamination of ground water sources. For this reason, it should be avoided where possible. Two possible options are hooking up to a municipal sewer system or capturing and reusing wastewater.



A plumbing system that allows pollutants to enter groundwater and soil can cause serious environmental problems.

Connecting to Sewers

Connecting to a municipal sewer system with permission from the local utility may allow operators to discharge larger volumes of wastewater than they would using on-site disposal methods. In addition, small amounts of hazardous wastes may be discharged into some municipal systems with permission from the wastewater treatment plant operator.

For more information on connecting to sewers, contact the MPCA at (612) 296-8006, or toll-free at 1-800-657-3864.

Reusing Wastewater

There are a variety of methods to capture and reuse wastewater ranging from sophisticated recycling systems with a series of filters and separators to a simple system of holding tanks hooked in series with water reused out of the last tank.

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For more information on reducing and recycling wastes, contact the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MNTAP) at (612) 627-4646, or toll-free at 1-800-247-0015.

On-Site Disposal

If on-site disposal is unavoidable, the design of the plumbing system can help in reducing the amount of pollutants discharged. Plumbing should include a sediment collection point and a flammable waste trap at facilities where wastes will be discharged to a septic tank or drainage field. See the diagrams on the following page for typical plumbing designs.

Plumbing for public buildings must be approved by the Minnesota Department of Health, or a city agency delegated to perform plumbing plan reviews.

Septic tanks and drainfields should also be carefully designed so that they can handle the amount of wastes that will be discharged.

For more technical information on septic tank and drainfield design, contact Gretchen Sabel, MPCA, at (612) 296-0550.

Car Wash Operational Controls

Operational controls are essential to ensure that no on-site disposal of hazardous waste occurs. The MPCA recommends the following for car wash and maintenance facilities.

- Train all facility users to assure compliance with rules.
- Have an attendant on-site when facility is open.
- Use biodegradable soaps only — no solvent-based cleaners.
- Exterior vehicle washing only — no engine cleaning.
- No washing of oily vehicles.
- No parking or maintenance of vehicles in wash bay.
- No storage or use of hazardous materials in wash bays.

This means that most coin-operated car washes should not be connected to on-site sewage treatment systems. Fa-

cilities that do not conform to these recommendations will be referred to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for further evaluation.

Maintenance of Facilities

Maintenance of wash facilities and on-site sewage systems is critical. Treatment equipment, tanks and chemical containers should be checked for leaks on a regular basis. Septic tanks should be pumped and grit from sediment traps removed on a regular basis. Sludge and grit

should be evaluated to determine whether or not they are hazardous and how they should be handled.

Contacts for More Information: Hazardous Waste Management and Disposal

Call the MPCA at (612) 297-8364 or toll-free at 1-800-657-3724.

Reducing and Recycling Wastes

For ideas on reducing and recycling wastes, call MNTAP at (612) 627-4646 or toll-free at 1-800-247-0015.

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