



REDUCING STORMWATER POLLUTION A GUIDE FOR MOBILE HOME GARDENERS AND LANDSCAPERS

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Clean stormwater helps keep our creeks, rivers and lakes, beaches and oceans healthy. Keeping our stormwater clean also provides us with new opportunities for stormwater harvesting and reuse. This helps us to protect our precious water reserves.

Home gardeners and landscapers have an important role in reducing the amount of soil, sand, mulch and other pollution that reaches our stormwater drains. This is particularly important for mobile businesses, because your work could be causing pollution at many different locations.

Why is stormwater pollution and a problem?

The stormwater system is the gutters, drains and pipes that collect rain run-off and take it to the nearest waterway.

This water is not treated to remove litter, debris and other pollution before it reaches our waterways.

Litter, soil, sand and other wastes from gardening or landscaping will cause major environmental problems if they get into the stormwater system. Sediment is already the most concentrated pollutant in our waterways and can create turbid (murky) waterways, which kill aquatic plants, destroy river habitats and absorb heavy metals that can kill fish. Many garden sprays attack aquatic life the same way they attack garden pests, or release nutrients that can cause toxic algal blooms.

The stormwater system is not the sewer. Sewage is water from sinks, bathrooms and toilets and goes to a sewage treatment plant. Many businesses need a trade waste agreement with the local water authority to discharge waste to a sewer.

Why is proper stormwater management important to my mobile business?

For your safety and your clients'

Cutting the risk of pollution and spills helps keep your workplace and your clients' neighbourhood clean and safe.

Stormwater pollution is a major environmental problem

Stormwater pollution is a major threat to Port Phillip Bay and to inland rivers across Victoria. It can affect the places we swim and the water we drink and wash in. Do not let your business be part of the problem.

Can I dispose of my waste through my clients' home waste services?

You should contact your local water authority to find out whether you need a trade waste agreement to discharge liquid waste (such as excess sprays) to your client's sewer (via their toilet or laundry sink).

In unsewered areas, you should take your wastewater with you.

Solid waste such as packaging for new materials and used plastic sheeting can be disposed of in your client's rubbish bin. Containers that have held hazardous materials should be disposed of according to manufacturers' instructions.

Contact EPA Victoria on 9695 2722 or EcoRecycle Victoria on 1800 353 233 for information about chemical waste disposal and collection.

At no time should litter or waste be disposed of down the stormwater drain.

because this is our home



What else can I do to reduce the risk of stormwater pollution?

Preparing to work

- Educate staff about preventing stormwater pollution.
- Identify stormwater entry points at each job and avoid conducting your work near them.
- Protect drain entry points with bunds to ensure polluted water, soil, sand and sediment do not wash down the drains – use a spill kit to clean them up (see spill kit information below).
- Locate stockpiles of sand, soil and mulch away from gutters and areas where they could blow or wash into drains. Protect them under tarpaulins or sheeting and use bunds, sandbags or sediment fences to stop them washing away.
- Use waste bins with lids so that litter does not blow around.
- Keep mechanical tools well maintained, to cut the risk of leaks, and regularly cleaned so that any leaks can be seen quickly.
- Explain your practices to your customers and set a good example.

On the job

- Control airborne sprays so they cannot land on surfaces where rain will wash them down the drain.
- Use pesticides, herbicides or fertiliser sparingly and look for low-toxin alternatives.
- Avoid using fertilisers on areas where they could wash off the garden or into a drain.
- Avoid applying fertilisers and sprays on windy days or if rain is predicted.
- Chemicals, paints, oils and any materials that could wash away must be stored safely to stop them getting into stormwater drains.

- Protect garden soils – use bunds or protective mesh to prevent soil or mulch being washed or blown off the garden. Grass or replant areas of disturbed soil.
- You can also encourage your clients to save water. Information about water smart gardens is available from water retailers and Melbourne Water.

Cleaning up

- Separate your waste for recycling wherever possible.
- Sweep up grass clippings, fallen leaves and garden waste and compost them. Do not sweep them into the gutter where they can block drains, causing flooding and harming aquatic plants and animals.
- After a job, wash equipment in areas that drain to the sewer or proper waste facilities. You may need to provide your own container if materials are unsuitable for the sewer.
- Make a plan to deal with spills. Do not hose spills down the drain – if the spill gets into the stormwater system you may be prosecuted for pollution.
- Get a spill kit and know how to use it. A spill kit should include:
 - protective clothing
 - absorbing and cleaning agents – sand, sawdust, absorbent pads/pellets, ‘kitty litter’, mops, brooms and rags
 - portable bunds (‘sausage’ barriers similar to sandbags) to direct spills or wash-water away from drains to clean-up areas
 - shovels, brooms and dustpans to sweep up solid or powder spills.



EPA INFORMATION CENTRE

40 City Road Southbank Victoria 3006 Telephone 03 9695 2722 Facsimile 03 9695 2780

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