



# REDUCING STORMWATER POLLUTION A GUIDE FOR MOBILE CARPET CLEANERS

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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.

Carpet/furniture steam cleaners and dry cleaners have an important role in reducing stormwater pollution by not releasing cleaning fluids into stormwater drains. This is particularly important for mobile businesses, because you could be causing pollution at many different locations.

## **Why is stormwater pollution a problem?**

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

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

Cleaning fluids and dirty wastewater will cause major environmental problems if they get into the stormwater system. Chemicals used in your business can poison aquatic fish and plants and destroy habitats.

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 detergents) to your client's sewer (via their toilet or laundry sink). In unsewered areas, you should take your wastewater with you.

*Under no circumstances should litter or waste be disposed of down the stormwater drain.*

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

### ***Preparing to work***

- Educate staff about preventing stormwater pollution.
- Identify floors that may have been treated with pesticides – they should not be cleaned for at least four weeks.
- Identify stormwater entry points at each job and ensure your wastewater cannot flow into them – protect with bunds (see spill kit information) if needed.

*because this is our home*



- Ensure that the filters on your cleaning equipment meet local specifications.
- Keep your equipment 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**

- Use low-toxin, low-surfactant and non-toxic materials wherever possible.
- Rinse out detergent containers into your cleaning machine to use the very last of your detergent.
- Water from cleaning should be directed to the sewer via the client's laundry or toilet if permitted under your waste agreement, or to the client's garden (where appropriate – check with them first) or to a container on your mobile vehicle so you can dispose of it responsibly after you leave.
- Control powders and airborne sprays so they cannot land on surfaces where rain will wash them down the drain.
- Any materials that could wash away must be stored safely to stop them getting into stormwater drains.
- Always rinse equipment and filters into a sink (or your container, if required) or onto grass where water can soak in.

#### **Cleaning up**

- Recycle detergent and chemical containers that are numbered 1,2 or 4 inside the recycling symbol.
- After a job, wash or clean out equipment in areas that drain to 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. Involve staff in this planning. 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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