

Good Practice

Any treatment system used must produce an effluent which complies with the conditions of the consent issued.

All parts of any treatment system should be regularly maintained to ensure their continued performance.

Oil interceptors are recommended as a method of catching oil and preventing it either compromising a treatment system or causing pollution.

Detergents, if present in wash effluent, may cause oil to emulsify. Interceptors are designed to retain oil but may not retain emulsified oils. As a consequence it is important to ensure that vehicle wash effluent does not enter interceptors designed to retain oil.

Where feasible the use of grit/silt traps, accompanied by regular checking and maintenance, is advisable. These will help to prevent silt accumulating in pipes and/or treatment systems and/or soak-aways. Where excessive silting occurs the system will fail and there is an associated danger of pollution. The positioning of grit/silt traps should be designed to protect the treatment system and avoid suspended solids reaching the discharge point.

Where an applicant wishes to discharge to/via a storm drain they must provide the Department with written permission from the owner of the storm drain (e.g. Northern Ireland Water (NIW) or Road Service). The consent conditions will be set as though the discharge is directly to the waterway into which the storm drain finally discharges.

VEHICLE WASH OPERATORS GUIDANCE

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Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is an agency within the Department Of Environment. Our aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural and built environment for the benefit of present and future generations. We have diverse responsibilities for regulating activities which have the potential to impact on our environment and for ensuring they are undertaken in a sustainable way.

Legal Requirement

The NIEA have responsibility to enforce the requirements of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. It is an offence under the Water Order to discharge or deposit, whether knowingly or otherwise, any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter so that it enters a waterway or underground stratum. A waterway is defined as any river, stream, watercourse, inland water or tidal waters. Conviction for such an offence may involve a fine of up to £20,000 or imprisonment for a term of up to 3 months, or both.

Vehicle Wash

Wash water from vehicle washes, especially those using detergents/vehicle wash formulations, has the potential to pollute waterways and groundwater as it is likely to contain a mixture of detergents, dirt particles, organic matter and oil residues.

Disposal Options

The Department has a preference for how such effluent is disposed of based on the potential to pollute. The options in order of preference are:

1. Re-cycling without discharge.
2. Northern Ireland Water (formerly Water Service) foul sewer. Relevant permission must be obtained from NIW before making this connection. NIW can be contacted at Northland House headquarters on Belfast 0845 7440088.
3. Holding tank and disposal via a registered/licensed carrier to a consented treatment facility with the capacity to adequately treat the effluent prior to discharge.
4. Consent – this will only be considered **EITHER** where detergents will not be used **OR** where the effluent is going to a treatment system that has a separate nutrient supply (e.g. sewage) and has the ability to reduce the combined BOD to within consent limits.

Consent Option

It is advisable to contact the Industrial Consents section of NIEA Water Management Unit as soon as possible and, in the interests of the applicant, before purchasing equipment or making an illegal discharge. Granting of Water Order consent is not guaranteed and will depend on a range of variables. No two locations or proposals are the same and the Department cannot make a final decision on the appropriateness of a consent until it has received a completed application with fee and made a full assessment. Where the site and/or the receiving medium (waterway or soil) prove unsuitable then the application will be refused.

Compliance Monitoring

The applicant will be required to install and maintain a treatment system capable of meeting all the conditions of any consent, if issued. It is probable that the discharge will be placed on the Department's compliance assessment and monitoring programme for which an annual fee is payable by the consent holder. If the discharge is found to be non-compliant the consent holder will be subject to enforcement action.

Use of Detergents & Appropriate Treatment

The use of detergents will only be considered where the detergents used comply with Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31st March 2004. This regulation is designed to ensure that any detergents used are bio-degradable and suitable for discharge after appropriate treatment. Detergents however do not contain sufficient nutrient to sustain a conventional biological waste water treatment system and NIEA will therefore only consider consenting the use of detergents where it is to a treatment system that has a separate nutrient supply (e.g. sewage) and has the ability to reduce the combined BOD to within consent limits.

Discharge to a Waterway – subject to 'Use of Detergents & Appropriate Treatment'

Consent conditions are site specific and vary depending on the following criteria:

1. the proposed maximum daily discharge volume
2. the water quality target for the receiving waterway
3. the available dilution under low flow conditions in the receiving waterway

Discharge via a Drainage Field (soak-away/sub-surface irrigation system) to Underground Stratum – subject to "Use of Detergents & Appropriate Treatment"

Consent to discharge via a drainage field into groundwater is dependent upon the capacity of the land to percolate water and the predicted maximum daily volume generated by the vehicle wash. The applicant must demonstrate, by doing a percolation test, that the land proposed for use as a drainage field is suitable for the proposed volume. The percolation test and the proposed drainage field, provided that the percolation test demonstrates the ground is suitable, must both be in accordance with British Standard BS6297:2007. Any discharge to an underground stratum must be via a drainage field/soak-away capable of providing adequate treatment and dispersal of the maximum consented volume of effluent. Discharges to un-made ground will not be consented – all wash water must be captured on an impermeable surface and directed through a suitable sample point to the drainage field/soak-away.