



Wastewater Discharges

How Are They Regulated?

All facilities generate some type of wastewater. Wastewater discharges are regulated by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Wastewater Management Division (WWMD) in Waterbury and through five Regional Offices throughout Vermont. Wastewater can be generated from bathroom and kitchen facilities (known as sanitary wastewater), from manufacturing or other businesses (known as “process” wastewater), or it can be a combination of sanitary and process wastewater. Under no circumstances should hazardous materials be discharged to any type of wastewater system. Liquid wastes that contain hazardous constituents must be collected and handled as a hazardous waste.

Wastewater is discharged to a municipal wastewater treatment plant, an on-site subsurface system (septic system or dry well), or in very limited circumstances, to the surface of the ground. How wastewater is regulated depends on a number of factors including: whether the discharge is sanitary, process, or combined wastewater, the contaminants present in the discharge, the volume of the discharge, and whether the wastewater is being discharged to an on-site subsurface system, a municipal treatment plant or on the surface of the ground.

How Are Discharges to a Municipal Sewer System Regulated?

Sanitary Wastewater Discharges Only

DEC requires a wastewater disposal permit for any sanitary discharge from a business or other public building to a municipal wastewater treatment plant unless the discharge began prior to 1970 and the system has not been modified since 1970. For more information, contact the WWMD Regional Office serving your area.

Process Wastewater Discharges

Businesses that discharge non-sanitary wastewater (floor drain wastewater, mop water, or any process related wastewater) to a wastewater treatment plant must notify the WWMD, the operator of the municipal plant, and the person responsible for administering the local sewer ordinance. Depending on the volume and make-up of the discharge, the business might be required to obtain a “pretreatment” permit from the WWMD. It is unlikely that such a permit would be required for “mop water” or other typically low risk discharge, but it is always necessary to make the required notifications, and to obtain approval, in writing, for the discharge. The municipality may require that non-sanitary wastewater pass through an Oil/Water Separator before discharge to the treatment plant. For more information contact the WWMD Regional Office serving your area.



How Are Discharges to an On-Site System Regulated?

Sanitary Wastewater Discharges

Any strictly sanitary discharges from a business or public building requires a permit unless the discharge began prior to 1970 and the system has not been modified since 1970. Contact the WWMD Regional Office serving your area for more information on obtaining a wastewater disposal permit for a sanitary discharge.

Process Wastewater Discharges

All businesses with existing discharges of non-sanitary wastewater to subsurface systems (septic systems, dry wells and holding tanks) must inform the appropriate WWMD Regional Office of the discharge. The specifics of the discharge are reviewed by an engineer in the Regional Office who determines whether or not the discharge is allowable. This review process applies to any discharge of process wastewater, whether the wastewater is a combination of sanitary and process wastewaters (a “combined waste”) or is disposed in an on-site system that is separate from sanitary wastewater (dry well). Both of these situations would require an Underground Injection Control (UIC) Permit.

Although, under limited circumstances, a business might be able to obtain a permit to discharge process wastewater on-site, the potential liability of such a practice should be given serious consideration. Even a small quantity of certain materials can contaminate groundwater. If persons nearby depend on groundwater, you have the potential to contaminate drinking water supply.

 **We discourage the discharge of any non-sanitary wastewater to the subsurface.**

Discharges to the Ground (Daylighting) of Non-Sanitary Wastewater

Daylighting is the practice of discharging floor drain or other process wastewater to the ground surface. Daylighting of floor drain wastewater is prohibited if the water originates in either vehicle maintenance (including dismantling) or washbays. Note that daylighting might be approved by the WWMD if all of the following apply:

- The wastewater doesn't discharge directly to surface water (stream, pond, wetland);
- The discharge is infrequent and of low volume; and
- The discharge doesn't contain hazardous materials or waste.

Floor Drains

Floor drains that discharge to a subsurface disposal system (septic system or dry well) must be registered as an underground injection control (UIC) well with the WWMD in Waterbury. The registration process consists of completing a Floor Drain Registration Form (Form UIC-A) for review by a WWMD engineer who will determine whether or not a UIC permit is required.

Need More Information on Floor Drains? Call the DEC Environmental Assistance Division for the “Floor Drain” Fact Sheet at 1-800-974-9559.