

Painting & Plastering Wastes

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If your day-to-day activities involve painting, sanding, plastering or any other activities using paint, solvents or adhesives, then you must consider the effects your activity may have on the environment before you begin.

What sort of things cause pollution?

Poor work practices at your site while sanding, painting or plastering houses or other buildings may be causing some of these problems:

- Stains or coloured marks on the ground, in gutters or on stormwater grates.
- Poor storage of products or wastes in uncovered containers resulting in spills and overflows which pollute stormwater.
- Solvent smells or coloured water in stormwater drains.
- Blockage of stormwater grates and drains with waste plaster.

How can my waste pollute the environment?

Any material or substance that is left uncovered or on the ground outside can flow or be washed by rainwater into a nearby stormwater drain where it will result in the pollution of the local stream, harbour or groundwater resource.

Waste paints, paint thinners and plasters contain a number of substances which can pollute our environment. These include toxic solvents, heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, chromium and mercury and suspended solids. If discharged, these substances can cause harm to environment by:

- Smothering small animals and destroying where they live;
- Preventing light from entering the water, making it difficult for animals to find food and for plants to get energy;
- Irritating, clogging or destroying the gills of fish;
- Poisoning animals and plants; and
- Some chemicals can build up in the bodies of plants and animals potentially causing long-term health effects.

It is important to realise that even a very small quantity of a pollutant, or just one accidental discharge can drastically alter the quality of a stream. Fish, insects and plant life can be killed, habitats destroyed and the stream can take up to ten years to recover.

You may think that your little bit of waste can't harm the environment but remember, there are many other people in the region carrying out activities similar to yours. Your waste, when combined with that of a million others, can amount to a significant amount of pollution occurring every day of the year. It is the cumulative effects of this combined discharge that causes serious damage to our environment and must be prevented.

It is illegal to cause pollution

In New Zealand the Resource Management Act (1991) is the law that protects our environment. It clearly states that every person is responsible for ensuring that their activities and those of their employees do not contribute to pollution of our environment.

Specifically, it is illegal to allow any substance to enter water either directly, through the stormwater system or via the contamination of land without prior authorisation from the Auckland Regional Council.

The Auckland Regional Council is committed to caring for our environment and is responsible for both helping the residents of our region to prevent pollution and enforcing the Resource Management Act (1991) if necessary.

By making a few simple changes to your site and daily practices you will be contributing to a pollution free environment for us all to enjoy both now and in the future.

Play it Safe – You can stop pollution resulting from your activities

- ✓ Wash out painting equipment into the sink or a sewer gully trap.
- ✓ Tip out excess paint to dry then place in a bin and wash containers on the garden or lawn.
- ✓ Clean up paint chips and dust from sanding and dispose of them in a bin.
- ✓ Leave excess paints with property owners for touch-ups. Small amounts can be painted onto boards or allowed to dry in their containers, then disposed of in a bin.
- ✓ Always use drip trays when transferring or draining paints and other liquids.
- ✓ Allow paint thinners to settle, then strain out the waste solids and re-use the liquid.
- ✓ Clean up all spilt material immediately and dispose of wastes into a bin in such a manner as to ensure that it won't leak out.
- ✓ Remember that waste solvents can be recycled.
- ✓ Store all paints, thinners and other liquids undercover to prevent rainfall washing out pollutants.
- ✓ If liquids must be stored outside, keep lids and caps on containers and use a secure area to avoid vandalism.
- ✓ Keep all areas exposed to rainfall clean and keep all wastes out of stormwater drains.
- ✓ ALL waste disposal must be via the sanitary sewer or another commercial waste contractor.

Always have a good Spill Contingency Plan with equipment handy and your staff well trained

The Auckland Regional Council can assist your company in developing a contingency plan or provide advice on these matters. Call the Council on 09 366 2000 and ask to speak to a member of the Pollution Control Team.