

# Flushing, Draining & Repainting Radiators

**UPC07**

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If your day-to-day activities involve the flushing, draining or replacement of radiators, then before you begin you must consider the potential your activity has to pollute the environment.

## What sort of things cause pollution?

Poor work practices at your site while maintaining vehicle radiators may be causing some of these common problems:

- Radiator fluid, sometimes fluorescent green and sometimes rusty in colour, running across the yard into a nearby stormwater drain or soaking into the ground.
- Rusty brown stains on the yard leading from the work area to the stormwater drain.
- An oily, rusty sheen on rainwater run-off from external work areas.

## How can 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 radiator fluids contain a number of substances which can pollute our environment. These include additives such as ethylene glycol, dissolved metals such as aluminium, iron and copper and suspended solids (the small particles that give the water a rusty colour).

If discharged, these substances can cause harm to environment by:

- Poisoning animals and plants;
- Smothering small aquatic plants and 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; and
- Causing all of the oxygen in the water to be used up when the materials are broken down by bacteria, this effectively suffocates all life in the stream.

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 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**

- ✓ If parts of your yard are already dirty and oily then you need to clean them. Block off access to all stormwater drains on your site and use an appropriate cleaning agent to scrub back to a clean surface. Capture the wash down and dispose of it as wastewater. Then you will be able to see spills and leaks as they occur and prevent them from causing pollution.
- ✓ Remove all soil and gravel that is visibly contaminated with oil to a commercial waste contractor for treatment and/or disposal.
  - ✓ Store all disused parts undercover.
  - ✓ Always use drip trays when working with parts that contain fluids .
  - ✓ Collect all waste radiator fluids for recycling or proper disposal either to the sanitary sewer with authorisation from the local territorial Council or via a commercial waste contractor.
  - ✓ 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.

### **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.