

Automotive Painting & Panelbeating

UPC14

October 2004

If your day-to-day activities involve painting, sanding/wet sanding or any other vehicle body repair activities using paints, solvents, thinners or detergents, 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 repairing, sanding, or painting may be causing some of these common 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 material.

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 sandings contain substances which can pollute our environment. These include toxic solvents, heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, chromium and mercury and suspended solids.

When discharged, these substances cause harm to the 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;
- Irritating and clogging the gills of fish; and
- Some chemicals can build up in the bodies of plants and animals potentially causing long-term health effects or render them unsuitable for human consumption.

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 affected 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 others, can result in 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

Wet Sanding

- ✓ Wet sand inside and allow the waste water to dry before sweeping up the paint residues and disposing of them in a waste bin.
- ✓ Collect all wet sanding waste water and dispose of it to the sewer with the approval of your local Council, either with appropriate drainage or with the use of a wet vacuuming system.
- ✓ Alternatively, dry sanding is seen as a more favourable option as it minimises the amount of wastes produced.

Dry Sanding

- ✓ After dry sanding, sweep up any paint chips and dust residues and dispose of them in a waste bin.
- ✓ Use a tarpaulin or something similar to collect the waste water and allow it to dry before disposing of any residues into a bin.
- ✓ Use a vacuum sanding system.

Painting

- ✓ Wash out water based painting equipment into a sink or sewer gully trap.
- ✓ 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 liquids.
- ✓ Clean up all spilt material immediately and dispose of waste 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.
- ✓ All waste disposal must be via a 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.