

# Cesspit/Catchpit Waste & Roadsweepings UPC16

October 2004

If your day-to-day activities involve the pumping of cesspits (also known as catchpits) and the collection of roadsweepings; or you engage the services of a company to dispose of this material; or you accept this material to your landfill; then you must consider the potential that your activity has to pollute the environment.

## What sort of things cause pollution?

Poor work practices while disposing of cesspit and roadsweeping waste can lead to the pollution of our streams and waterways. Some examples of inappropriate waste disposal methods are:

- Cesspit and roadsweeping waste being dumped at cleanfill sites.
- Water and decant water from cesspit and roadsweeping waste being dumped into stormwater systems or streams.
- Stockpiling of cesspit and roadsweeping wastes in an uncontrolled manner.
- Allowing these wastes or leachate from waste piles to enter the stormwater system or streams and creeks.

## How can cesspit waste and roadsweepings pollute the environment?

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

Studies undertaken overseas, nationally and in the Auckland region have shown that cesspit and roadsweeping wastes contain a number of toxic substances which can seriously pollute our environment. These include a wide range of hydrocarbons and heavy metals such as lead, zinc and copper.

If dumped anywhere other than a "permitted sanitary landfill", these substances and the associated water run-off can cause harm to environment by:

- Allowing hydrocarbons and heavy metals to seep into the land;
- Poisoning plants and animals;
- Forming an oily layer or film on the surface of water and preventing oxygen from entering the water and making it difficult for animals to breathe; 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 small quantity of a pollutant, or just one accidental discharge can drastically reduce 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, will 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 disposing of cesspit waste and roadsweepings in an appropriate manner, 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 cesspit waste and roadsweepings

- If you employ a contractor to clean your streets or yards and pump out your cesspits then you need to make sure cesspit waste goes to a permitted sanitary landfill and **not** to a cleanfill or to the stormwater system.
- If you store or de-water cesspit waste or roadsweepings you need to make sure that run-off from this material is disposed of appropriately as a trade waste. If it is discharged to the sanitary sewer system you need the approval of the local city or district council.
- **Do not** de-water cesspit or roadsweeping waste, during or after collection, to the stormwater system or to natural water, this water is contaminated and must be disposed of as a trade waste.
- The disposal of cesspit waste or roadsweepings to cleanfill or hardfill in the Region is prohibited as these materials are not cleanfill and will contaminate these filling operations with heavy metals and hydrocarbons.
- Cesspit waste must undergo laboratory analysis to determine if it needs further treatment to dispose of to a permitted sanitary landfill in the Auckland region. To determine what analysis is required, contact your landfill operator.
- Roadsweepings will not require laboratory analysis or dispose of to a permitted sanitary landfill but they still must be disposed of to a sanitary landfill.
- You must keep these two waste streams separate as cesspit waste composition can vary from site-to-site.

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.

For more information phone 09 366 2000  
To report pollution phone the 24 hr Water  
Pollution Hotline 09 377 3107

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