

# Food Waste

UPC20

You may think that your little bit of waste couldn't possibly harm our environment. But when it joins with pollution from more than a million other Aucklanders, the impacts can be significant. This *Pollution facts* pamphlet will help identify whether you could be causing water pollution and provides advice for carrying out your activities in a legal and environmentally responsible manner.

## Water pollution can be caused by the following food industry activities:

- Tipping or washing cooking fats or oils down drains. Once they leave your sink, fats and oils solidify in pipes creating blockages, these blockages reduce the capacity of the pipes thereby increasing the likelihood of sewage overflows.
- Washing or water blasting of outdoor areas. Food, drinks, grease, dirt, soaps and detergents can contaminate water if allowed to flow into outdoor stormwater drains.
- Directing wash water from the cleaning of floors, rubbish bins, mats, filters and other inside surfaces or equipment into outdoor stormwater drains.
- Waste cooking oil drums overflowing due to overfilling or heavy rainfall.
- Outdoor leaky waste bins.

## How does food waste cause water pollution?

When food waste, detergents and other pollutants enter the stormwater system they flow untreated into the nearest waterway (a stream, harbour, or the beach). These pollutants decompose in waterways and take oxygen from the fish and other organisms that need it to live.



## Problems and Solutions

### Grease Handling and Disposal

Never pour oil or grease down any drain (even inside drain or sinks as this causes sewer overflows). Do not try to "dissolve" grease by adding hot water or detergents – this will only move the grease further down the sewer line. Recycle grease and oil. Store waste oil in sealed leak-proof containers (under cover and banded if possible). Regularly inspect and clean grease traps to keep them functioning properly.

### Equipment and Outdoor Cleaning


Any waste water generated from the cleaning of floors, floor mats, filters, rubbish bins etc, must be disposed of in a mop sink, floor drain, or other inside drain connected to the sanitary sewer. Ensure any wash water from cleaning outside areas does not go down the stormwater drain. (For more information on outside cleaning see *Pollution facts* UPC15 'Pressure Water-Blasting').

## Waste Bins

Have your waste contractor replace or repair leaky bins. Bag and seal food waste before placing in the waste bin. Do not place liquids in the bin. Keep lid closed to keep out rainwater and to prevent rubbish spilling out. Consider recycling your food wastes by composting or having it picked up by a pig farmer.

## Spill Cleanup

Use dry methods for spill cleanup (sweeping, kitty litter etc). Do not hose down spills. If wet cleaning is required, mop or wet vac up water and dispose to a sink or other inside drain. Do not use bleach or disinfectant if there is a possibility the water may flow to a stormwater drain. Prepare a spill plan and train your staff how to use it (see *Pollutionfacts* UPC04 'Being Prepared for a Spill').

DO:	DO NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Recycle fats and oils and store inside</li><li>✓ Pour all wash water into inside sinks or drains</li><li>✓ Ensure your grease trap is serviced regularly</li><li>✓ When outside areas are cleaned, ensure that none of the wash water enters the stormwater system</li><li>✓ Clean up spills as soon as they are noticed</li><li>✓ Bag waste securely and keep lids of waste bins closed</li><li>✓ Train all staff in how to avoid discharges to the environment</li><li>✓ Call the 24 hour water pollution hotline to report the spill to the stormwater system</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ Allow any wash water to enter the stormwater drains</li><li>✗ Overfill waste oil drums</li><li>✗ Pour oil or fat down any drains</li><li>✗ Allow waste bins to leak</li><li>✗ Allow fat or food waste to build up on outside areas that may then be washed to stormwater</li><li>✗ Wash spilt food waste down outside drains</li></ul> 

## Remember:

- Only clean rainwater goes down outside drains
- Even small quantities of seemingly harmless materials can damage the environment
- It is **ILLEGAL** to cause or allow water, land, or air pollution. Causing or allowing such pollution can result in fines of up to \$1000 or possibly prosecution



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