

TOOLBOX TALK

WATER POLLUTION - SILT

WHAT?

Silt is the term used for very fine particles of soil. Silt mixed with water in the form of mud, can be washed off construction sites into nearby watercourses and drains.

Pollution by silt can be caused by: rainwater run off from uncovered areas of the site, pumping out and dewatering of excavations, tunnelling operations and cleaning of ditches and drains.

Proper planning will prevent these pollution incidents.

WHY?

□ **Avoid environmental harm:** High levels of silt suspended in water can suffocate fish by blocking their gills, can remove essential oxygen from the water and can kill plants, animals and insects living in the water by stopping sunlight reaching them.

□ **Avoid environmental harm:** Silt often combines with other contaminants such as oils and chemicals potentially causing greater pollution than silt alone.

□ **Avoid prosecution:** Because of the potential for harm, it is illegal to allow silt to enter a watercourse or drain. Silt pollution spoils the appearance of watercourses, is easily traceable to the site from where it originated and, in the past, has been a major cause of prosecution.

DO

✓ Only discharge silty water into designated settlement systems

✓ Check that site drainage and settlement systems are working - discolouration may indicate high pollutant loading

✓ Stop pumping and contact your manager if you think a problem is arising

✓ Ensure that all hardstandings are kept clean – notify your manager if an area is silty or is covered in mud

✓ Notify your manager immediately if you see silty water entering a watercourse or drain and do try to stop it or divert it away by, for example, using sand bags.

Remember discharge consent may be required. For further guidance on consents and pollution prevention contact the relevant regulator.

DON'T

✗ DON'T dewater any excavation without getting permission from your manager

✗ DON'T pump silty water directly into rivers, ditches or surface water drains

✗ DON'T strip land of vegetation unless it is absolutely necessary – vegetation reduces silt run-off

✗ DON'T store soil, stone or similar materials within 10 metres of watercourses or drains

✗ DON'T dig a grip to release ponded water to a watercourse or drain.

