



Illicit Discharges

This document defines illicit discharges, allowable non-stormwater discharges and provides a brief overview of how to identify and address illicit discharges. This document is provided for informational purposes only.

What is an illicit discharge?

An illicit discharge occurs when something other than stormwater (with a few exceptions), is released into a publically operated Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4).

What discharges are allowed to storm drains?

The standard rule of thumb is - *only stormwater is allowed to enter storm drains*. However, the following non-stormwater exceptions are allowed by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ):

- ◆ Cold water used for building washing (1200-Z and 1200-COLS permitted facilities)*
- ◆ Waterline flushing
- ◆ Landscape irrigation
- ◆ Discharges from potable water sources
- ◆ Uncontaminated pumped groundwater
- ◆ Foundation/footing drain discharge
- ◆ Air conditioning condensate

**Tenants must get approval from the Port of Portland prior to discharge.*

Why is it important to eliminate illicit discharges?

An illicit discharge is a violation of the federal Clean Water Act, which carries with it the potential for fines and responsibility for cleanup costs. Discharges that contain chemicals, soil, food waste or even “biodegradable” ingredients can have a significant impact on water quality, human health and wildlife habitat. These discharges can persist in the environment for years, harm aquatic creatures and other wildlife, or cause algae blooms.

What is the Port of Portland’s role in eliminating illicit discharges?

As an MS4 stormwater permittee, the Port is required to eliminate illicit discharges into the

infrastructure it owns, operates, maintains or controls. To do so, the Port adopted [Ordinance 361](#) which establishes a framework for how the Port will address illicit discharges from tenant operations that are potentially harmful to human health and the environment. In addition, Port lease documents prohibit the discharge of non-stormwater discharges to the Port's stormwater infrastructure.

How should illicit discharges be reported?

The Port encourages immediate reporting of any suspected discharge or spill on Port property. This is critical to quick containment, resolution, and limiting any cleanup costs. The Port and its tenants also have reporting responsibilities to the National Response Center and the State of Oregon and other entities that manage surface waters. Tenants can report an illicit discharge by calling:

- ◆ 503-240-2230 for marine facilities and industrial properties
- ◆ 503-460-4000 for aviation facilities (*911 calls in this area will automatically be routed to this number*)

What stormwater management considerations could help avoid an illicit discharge?

- ◆ Hire a parking lot sweeping contractor prior to rinsing paved surfaces to help eliminate the potential for an illicit discharge. Do not use detergents or hot water.
- ◆ Hire a vactor service company to clean spilled or accumulated material out of containment areas or sumped water quality treatment facilities.
- ◆ If water does not contain any hazardous substances it can often be discharged to the sanitary sewer with local jurisdiction approval.

Example: regular vehicle or equipment wash waters with cleaning agents

- ◆ For large discharge quantities with high pollutant loads, a batch discharge permit can be obtained from the local jurisdiction that allows wastewater discharge to the sanitary sewer. Pretreatment may be required prior to discharge.

Examples: waste waters with high organic content, waste water from decanting operations, temporary waste water storage from construction

- ◆ Infiltration into landscaped areas is allowed, as approved by the Port, for occasional wash water discharges not containing cleaning agents.

Examples: pressure washing, rinsing wash receptacles, cleanup after landscaping activities

None of these activities are allowed if hazardous wastes, petroleum products or other chemical wastes have leaked or spilled on the site.