

A Guide for Restaurant Managers

Restaurants use hundreds of thousands of gallons of water each day to clean utensils, equipment, mats, floors, and exterior areas.

Is your restaurant sending WASTE to Retention/Detention Basins or Washes?

Improper cleaning and waste handling practices can cause waste from restaurants to enter storm drains and pollute local storm water retention/detention basins, washes, and/or the Santa Cruz River. Bacteria levels increase when liquid and solid pollutants enter the municipal separate storm sewer system. Poor cleaning and waste handling practices in restaurants send pollutants including solvents, floor cleaners, cleaning agents, grease, oil, food waste, cigarette butts, paper napkins, and styrofoam into our storm sewer system.

Food-related businesses can affect the local pollution issue in many ways. For instance, putting food waste in leaky dumpsters, not cleaning up outdoor food spills or chemical spills properly, and dumping wash water into the alley way, street, or gutter allows contaminated runoff to enter storm drains.

To keep basins and washes clean, it is very important that all water used in restaurant cleaning be directed only to drains leading to the sanitary sewer or septic system.

The common sense, good housekeeping measures below can be implemented with little effort and at a reasonable cost to the facility owner/operator.

Cleaning and Disposal

If cleaning agents and restaurant waste are not handled or disposed of properly, they can pollute local storm water basins and washes.

- Wash floor mats, kitchen mats, filters, and garbage cans in a mop sink, janitor's sink, or near the kitchen floor drain. This will ensure that the wastewater will flow to the wastewater treatment plant and will not wash into a parking lot, alley, sidewalk, street, or storm drain.
- Pour floor wash water into a janitorial or mop sink, instead of onto a parking lot, alley, sidewalk, or street.

- Recycle grease and oil. Avoid pouring it into sinks, floor drains, dumpsters, or onto a parking lot or street. Grease can clog sewer drains and storm drains. Clogged drains smell bad to your customers and are unsanitary.
- Sweep up food particles, cigarette butts, and trash from outside areas before rinsing or steam cleaning. Mop up excess water into a wringer bucket and empty this water into the janitor's sink, a kitchen floor drain, or the toilet so that it will flow to the wastewater treatment plant.
- If you pressure-wash your outdoor seating area, entrance, or surrounding sidewalk area with bleaches, strippers, or detergents, don't allow any of this water to flow into the gutter.
- When cleaning trash containers or enclosures, don't let bleaches or detergents used to scrub them drain into the gutters, parking lot, or street.
- Make sure that wash water only goes into a sanitary sewer. Remove all trash, waste, and dirt and dispose of them into a trash container.

Spill Prevention and Cleanup

Contamination from alleys, gutters, and streets enter storm drains that flow directly to local retention/detention basins or washes. If wastewater evaporates before reaching the storm drain, the toxic materials remain on the street until the next storm washes it into the basins or washes.

- Use dry methods for spill cleanup, such as using cat litter to soak up spills and sweeping rather than rinsing spills. This will keep liquid waste out of the storm drain.
- Sweep out debris from the trash container first, scrub with a hard bristle brush and nontoxic soap, then rinse off the residue into a sanitary sewer drain.

Grease Management

Grease management is a necessary task to help protect our water quality. If grease accumulates in the sewer lines, it can cause blockage, which may result in raw sewage spills.

Grease that enters a storm drain will flow into retention/detention basins and washes is untreated.

- Start by cleaning grease traps at least once a week. Some grease traps require more frequent cleaning. Adjust as necessary.
- Avoid pouring grease into trash bins, street gutters, or sewers. Mis-handled grease may leak from the trash bins and clog pipelines.

- It is illegal to put anything but stormwater down the storm drain.
- Collect bulk grease in containers and contact a firm to haul it away. The grease will be recycled into a useful product such as biofuel.
- Regularly maintain grease traps or interceptors.
- Get the receiving station manifests from grease haulers to make sure that they dispose of grease at an approved facility to avoid causing problems.

Minimize Toxicity and Waste

- Use the least toxic products available.
Dispose of cleaners (solvent, floor cleaners, and detergents) and cleaning rags properly.
- Avoid using disposable items such as paper or plastic plates and plastic utensils whenever possible. If you must use disposable products, use paper instead of styrofoam.

Inform Your Employees

Employees are more likely to follow good cleaning practices if they understand how their actions affect the environment.

- Hold staff meetings to discuss the importance of pollution prevention.
- Share these tips with your employees to educate them about good cleaning practices.
- Clearly label areas where mat washing is and is not permitted.
- Clearly label areas that are not acceptable to dump wash water.
- Post reminders near dumpsters to keep liquid waste from being put into the trash.
- Train employees in the use of spill clean-up materials.
- Log training sessions (date, instructor, attendees, etc.) for compliance with your Injury, Illness, and Prevention Program.
- Remind your employees about good cleaning practices.
- Make pollution prevention part of the employee performance rating.