

If your day-to-day activities involve painting, sanding, plastering or any other activities using paint, solvents or adhesives, consider the effects your activity may have on the environment before you begin.

What causes pollution?

Poor work practices at your site while sanding, painting or plastering houses or other buildings may be causing some of these common problems:

- Stains or coloured marks on the ground, in gutters or on stormwater grates
- Poor storage of products or wastes in uncovered containers resulting in spills and overflows which pollute stormwater
- Solvent smells or coloured water in stormwater drains
- Blockage of stormwater grates and drains with waste plaster.

How your waste can pollute the environment

Any material or substance left uncovered or on the ground outside can flow, or be washed by rainwater, into a nearby stormwater drain where it will result in the pollution of the local stream and/or the coast.

Waste paints, paint thinners and plasters contain a number of substances that can pollute our environment. These include toxic solvents, heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, chromium and mercury and suspended solids.

If discharged, these substances cause harm to the environment by:

- Poisoning animals and plants
- Smothering small aquatic plants and animals and destroying where they live
- Preventing light from entering the water, making it difficult for animals to find food and for plants to get energy
- Irritating and clogging the gills of fish
- Building up chemicals in the bodies of plants and animals potentially causing long term health effects or rendering them unsuitable for human consumption.

Even a very small quantity of pollutant, or just one accidental discharge can drastically alter the quality of a stream. Fish, insects and plant life can be killed and their habitats destroyed. The stream can take many years to recover.



Photo 1: Care should be taken to make sure that substances from preparation or painting are disposed of correctly

You may think that your little bit of waste can't harm the environment but there are other people in the region carrying out activities similar to yours. Your waste when combined with that of others can amount to a significant amount of pollution occurring every day of the year. The cumulative effects of combined discharges can cause 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 authorisation.

By making a few simple changes to your site and your daily practices you will be contributing to a pollution free environment for us all to enjoy both now and in the future.

Play it safe – stop pollution resulting from your activities

- Wash out painting equipment into the sink or a sewer gully trap
- Alternatively wash onto a grassed area.
- Tip out excess paint to dry then place in a bin and wash containers on the garden or lawn
- Clean up paint chips and dust from sanding and dispose of them in a bin
- Leave excess paints with property owners for touch-ups. Small amounts can be painted onto boards or allowed to dry in their containers, then disposed of in a bin
- Always use drip trays when transferring or draining paints and other liquids
- Allow paint thinners to settle, then strain out the waste solids and reuse the liquid
- Clean up all spilt material immediately and dispose of waste into a bin, ensuring that it won't leak out
- Remember that waste solvents can be recycled
- Store all paints, thinners and other liquids under cover to prevent rainfall washing out pollutants
- If liquids must be stored outside, keep lids and caps on containers and use a secure area to avoid vandalism
- Keep all areas exposed to rainfall clean, and keep all wastes out of stormwater drains
- Dispose of all waste via the sewerage system or a commercial waste contractor.

Always have a good spill contingency plan. Keep pollution control equipment handy and make sure your staff members are well trained.

**For further advice or information contact:
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