



Minnesota  
Pollution  
Control  
Agency

Metro, North  
and South  
Districts,  
Community and  
Area Wide  
Program

# Overview of Underground Disposal Control Program

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Underground disposal of commercial and industrial wastewater can cause serious soil and ground water contamination if not carefully controlled. On-site sewage treatment systems are designed to treat household wastewater and do not provide adequate treatment for the types of contaminants found in commercial and industrial facilities. This series of fact sheets provides an overview of the regulations and restrictions concerning the management, treatment and disposal of industrial wastewater in underground sewage systems in Minnesota. Because of the potential for wastewater to contaminate soil and ground water, the policies and regulations regarding underground disposal systems are strict.

## Hazardous Waste Disposal

It is illegal in Minnesota to dispose of any hazardous waste through underground discharge, including septic systems and dry wells. All wastes must be evaluated to determine if they are hazardous. Waste which meet the definition of a hazardous waste must be managed in accordance with Minnesota's hazardous waste rules.

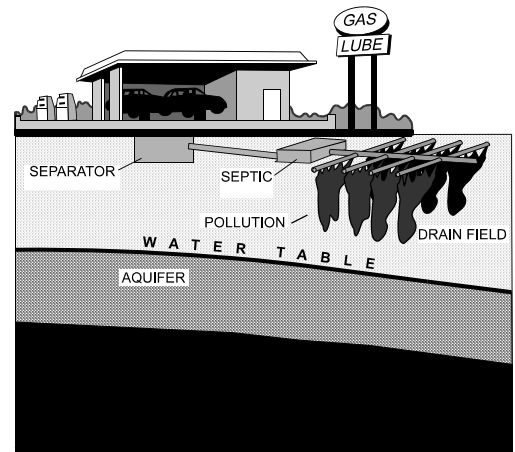
## Evaluating Wastes

Businesses are responsible for evaluating the waste they generate to determine if it is hazardous or not. In some cases, a brief

description of the waste and how it is generated is sufficient. In other cases, laboratory testing may be required.

Testing of the ground water at a site may also be required to determine if hazardous wastes have been disposed of in the past. If hazardous wastes are present, the owner/operator of the facility will be referred to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Site Remediation for further evaluation.

In all cases, information must be presented to clearly show that hazardous waste will not be, and has not been, disposed of at the site.



A plumbing system that allows pollutants to enter ground water and soil can cause serious environmental problems.





## What cannot be disposed of in sewage systems?

- Any hazardous waste
- Shop sink wastes
- Oily wash water
- Industrial process wastes

## What can be disposed of in sewage systems?

- Domestic wastes (such as from kitchens and bathrooms)
- Non-contact cooling water (volume may be limited).
- Vehicle wash water within certain limits.

Disposal of anything else in a sewage system requires approval from United States Environmental Protection Agency and the MPCA.

## Alternatives to on-site sewage system disposal

A facility owner should consider all alternatives to on-site disposal. Underground disposal is the least desirable option and should only be proposed when all other options are not feasible.

Some alternatives might include:

- Change processes to reduce wastes.
- Recycle and reuse wastewater.
- Connect to city sewer.
- Connect to a holding tank.
- Other solution tailored to business.

For more ideas on alternatives, see fact sheet 8-02 in this series.

## Allowable disposal

If alternatives do not exist, the MPCA may approve on-site underground disposal of wastes. The conditions under which this will be allowed differ according to the nature and the volume of the waste being disposed. An MPCA permit or approval may be necessary. Call the MPCA at 651-296-7773 for more information on permits.

Waste not appropriate for on-site disposal must be contained and handled under the MPCA's hazardous or solid waste rules. Waste not fitting into either of these categories will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## Floor drains and shop sink connections

Floor drains and shop sinks connected to on-site septic systems or dry wells can be pathways for contaminants to reach ground water sources--especially in vehicle maintenance and industrial facilities. For this reason, these types of connections will not be allowed. This position is consistent with current federal policy. Floor drains and shop sinks must be connected to a municipal sewer system or holding tank so that wastes can be treated before they are discharged to the environment.

## Contacts for more information

### *Hazardous waste management and disposal*

Call the MPCA at (651) 296-6300 or toll-free at (800) 657-3864.

### *Reducing and recycling wastes*

For ideas on reducing and recycling wastes, contact your local trade association or call the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program at 612-627-4546 or toll-free at 1-800-247-0015.

**MPCA Web site:** <http://www.pca.state.mn.us>

### *Connecting to city sewer*

Certain industries must obtain MPCA permits to discharge to the sewer. Call the MPCA at 651-296-8006 or toll-free at 1-800-657-3864.

### *Connecting to a holding tank*

See fact sheet #3 in this series for more information on holding tanks.

### *Car wash and vehicle maintenance facilities*

See fact sheet #4 in this series for more specific information on regulations covering car washes and maintenance facilities.

### *EPA*

Underground Injection Control Program, 312-886-4299.

*To find out more about the MPCA's Underground Disposal Control Program, please read the other fact sheets in this series, or contact Gretchen Sabel, MPCA, at 651-296-7773 (voice); 651-282-5332 (TTY); or call toll-free at 1-800-657-3864 (voice/TTY).*