

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR DRINKING WATER

Contractor Education

Did you know that approximately two-thirds of Louisiana residents get their drinking water from ground water, while one-third of Louisiana residents get their drinking water from surface water sources? Ground water comes from aquifers, underground formations of sand and gravel that contain water. Examples of surface water sources are lakes, streams, or rivers. Our drinking water can become contaminated when substances that we use everyday run off, or flow, into our surface water sources, or seep into the ground and into our aquifers. What are some of these substances?

- Paints
- Solvents
- Gasoline
- Oils
- Varnishes, stains and dyes
- Household cleaners
- Fertilizers
- Pesticides

General contractors may use these substances daily. Help us prevent drinking water contamination. Listed below are some simple steps you should use in your business to protect drinking water everyday.

- Use chemicals as per directions.
- Follow directions for proper disposal of chemicals and wastes.
- Do not dump solvents, used oil, or toxic chemicals down storm drains. Seal floor drains.
- Do not dump waste that contains organic chemicals or metals into septic system. These must be recycled.
- Store chemicals in covered areas and in areas with impervious surfaces.
- Make sure all chemicals and other materials are labeled and are stored in proper containers. Containers should not be corroded or leaking and should have covers.
- Monitor use of all raw materials and wastes.
- Use measures to prevent overflow of tanks.
- Place drip pans where chemicals are stored or where they might leak, for example, under machinery. Then recycle or dispose of material properly.
- If a liquid chemical spills, clean it up with a dry absorbent. Do not wash down the drain.

Also, controlling nonpoint source runoff from construction sites is critical to maintaining water quality. Non-point source runoff occurs when silt, and nutrients such as fertilizers, "run off" of the property and into water bodies during rain events. By implementing and maintaining proper erosion and sediment control practices, such as silt fences, filter strips, and erosion control blankets, you can significantly reduce the amount of sediments that enter surface waters.

As a general contractor, you may be responsible for the following:

- Controlling fugitive emissions, including dust, kicked up by trucks and other equipment, and from equipment such as generators and compressors as per air quality regulations.
- Following asbestos regulations for the demolition of asbestos-containing equipment or structures.
- Obtaining a storm water permit for small and large construction activities as per water quality regulations.

Remember:

- Open burning of construction debris is forbidden.
- Construction debris should be disposed of in an approved landfill.

For more information, please contact the Drinking Water Protection Team at 225-219-3510 or visit our website at www.deq.louisiana.gov/aeps. More assistance for contractors may also be found through the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's Small Business Assistance Program at 1-800-259-2890 or www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/85/Default.aspx.



A MESSAGE FROM THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY'S DRINKING WATER PROTECTION TEAM

"PROTECT YOUR WATER ONE DROP AT A TIME"