



Food Businesses

Make Clean Water a Part of Your Business

In Medford, the stormwater collection system and the wastewater collection system are not connected. Anything that flows or is washed into a storm drain ends up directly in our waterways, untreated, where it can harm fish and wildlife, and pollute drinking water sources. When food waste and pollutants associated with food businesses enter the stormwater drainage system, the result is polluted waterways. Routine activities such as cleaning greasy vents and operating and maintaining delivery trucks can be sources of pollution, unless proper precautions are taken.

What's the Problem?

The most common pollutants associated with food-related businesses are oxygen-demanding substances (such as rotting food scraps), milk, grease and oil (from cooking food and operating delivery vehicles), and toxins (from cleaners, solvents, degreasers, brake fluid, antifreeze and battery acids). Other pollutants from food businesses include nutrients (from detergents and food scraps), sediments (from unpaved parking lots, landscaping materials and exposed soils), and metals (from process equipment and automotive products such as fuels, brake liners and oils).

Common Pollutants associated with Food Businesses Are:

Rotting food wastes in waterways, which use oxygen to decay, robbing oxygen from fish and other aquatic life.

Oil and Grease coat fish gills, block oxygen from entering the water and clog drainage facilities.

Toxins from used cleaners, empty containers, rags (soaked with solvents, oven cleaners, floor cleaners and detergents), and automotive products (antifreeze, brake fluid, radiator flush and used batteries) all harm water quality when they enter the stormwater drainage system.

Food Businesses: Potential pollution Problems and How to Prevent Them

Pollutant Problems and Solutions:

Problem:

Rotting food wastes enter waterways when they are washed off parking lots and streets and into the stormwater drainage system. These include spilled milk, meat wrappers, etc.

Solution and Preventative Practices:

- Fix and cover leaky dumpsters and trash compactors. Keep lids closed to prevent rain from getting in and causing leakage.
- Prepare for and promptly clean up outdoor spills and wastes in the parking lot and the loading area.
- Properly recycle, compost or dispose of food, chemical and landscaping wastes.

Problem:

Oil and Grease from leaky dumpsters, cooking food, cleaning vents and maintaining delivery vehicles coat fish gills, smother aquatic life and clog drainage facilities.

Solution and Preventive Practices:

- Make sure your facility has an approved grease trap and clean it on a routine basis.
- Wash greasy equipment only in a designated wash area connected to the sanitary sewer system with an oil/water separator. Do not dump oil or grease into dumpsters where they can leak.
- Store wastes so they can't leak or be washed into the drainage system.
- Recycle oil and grease wastes and properly store them before pickup; never dump them down storm drains or on the ground.
- Cover any fueling area and drain it to the sanitary sewer.
- Install and maintain an oil/water separator to treat parking lot runoff.

Problem:

Toxins found in oven cleaners, floor cleaners, antifreeze, brake fluid, battery acid and solvents harm wildlife and people.

Solution and Preventative Practices:

- Maintain a clean; organized work area to minimize spills.
- Wash vehicles and delivery grates in a designated area that does not drain to the stormwater system.
- Properly store all materials and have a spill control plan.
- Properly dispose of or recycle all materials.
- Cover any fueling area to keep rain from washing away leaked or spilled fuel, contain spilled fuel for proper disposal. Do not drain it to the sanitary sewer.

Note: Medford Code prohibits Discharge of fuel to a sanitary sewer. (11.202) (2).

Problem:

Nutrients from detergents used to wash equipment and vehicles, food wastes, or exposed soils enable algae to choke waterways.

Solution and Preventative Practices:

- Wash only in a designated area that does not drain to the stormwater system.
- Plant vegetation or pave exposed soils (depending on use) to prevent erosion.
- Properly dispose of or compost food wastes.

Problem:

Sediments washed from exposed soils and dirty paved parking lots clog storm drains, carry pollutants and choke wildlife.

Solution and Preventative Practices:

- Clean and maintain your business site; use a broom and dustpan on paved surfaces. Never hose pollutants into storm drains.
- Cover exposed soils.
- Stabilize eroding banks.
- Preserve and enhance streams and nearby vegetation.

Problem:

Metals from fuel and waste oil build up in creek sediment and cause aquatic deformities.

Solution and Preventative Practices:

- Cover containers and materials.
- Properly dispose of used oils and scrap metals.
- Cover and drain any fueling area.
- Plan for and control spills.

How You Can Help Protect Medford's Water Quality**Oxygen-Demanding Substances Take Oxygen from the Water**

Food, milk, agricultural process waste, along with plant debris from landscape areas and some chemical wastes, fall into a category of water pollutants known as oxygen-demanding substances. Such substances use dissolved oxygen when they decay or chemically react. If dissolved oxygen levels in the water become too low, aquatic animals can become stressed or die. Salmon and trout are particularly at risk because they need high dissolved oxygen levels to live.

Food businesses can cause oxygen-demanding substances to enter the stormwater drainage system by putting food waste in a leaky dumpster, improperly disposing of landscaping debris, not cleaning up outdoor food, milk or chemical spills, or by washing outdoor spills into the stormwater drainage system.

Oil and Grease – A Harmful Film

Oil and grease cause several problems in surface water. They coat fish gills (making it hard for the fish to breathe), block oxygen from entering the water, and clog drainage facilities (leading to increased maintenance costs and potential flooding problems). Even at low concentrations, some types of oil and grease contain chemicals toxic to aquatic life.

Oil and grease on surfaces exposed to rain or wash water can be washed to the storm drain and ultimately to the Bear Creek, Rogue River or other local waterways. Sources include leaky dumpsters, oils improperly stored or spilled outdoors, greasy air vents washed outdoors and air vents that release oil and grease outdoors. Business and customer vehicles improperly maintained may; also drip oil and other fluids into parking lots where they are washed into the drainage system by rain.

Regular maintenance and removal of accumulated grease is vital to the proper performance of grease traps. Their job is to keep grease out of the sewer pipes and pumping stations where the grease can cause blockages and maintenance problems.

Toxins – Poison Life

By definition, toxic pollutants are harmful to wildlife, people or both. High concentrations of toxic materials kill fish. Some toxic pollutants accumulate in the environment; others concentrate in the food chain as one large organism eats several smaller ones.

Businesses that handle food products use a wide variety of materials toxic to the environment. Activities that generate toxic liquid and solid wastes include maintaining processing equipment, operating delivery vehicles and cleaning and disinfecting food service equipment.

Nutrients – Too Much Can Cause Problems

Nutrients are substances such as phosphorus and nitrogen that stimulate plant growth. Sources include equipment and vehicle washing detergents, food wastes, exposed soil from unpaved areas and application of landscaping chemicals.

Although nutrients are need by plants to grow, high levels over stimulate the growth of algae and other aquatic plants. This causes unpleasant tastes, odors, unsightly conditions and lowered dissolved oxygen levels in the water.

Sediments – Muddy Waters

Sediments – such as sands, clays and silts – are often the largest pollutant in stormwater runoff by volume and weight. Sediments carried from exposed soils, unpaved parking areas and paved parking lots affect adjacent properties and clog storm drains. This causes flooding and higher maintenance costs.

When sediment enters streams and lakes, it creates cloudy water. This condition detracts from recreational use and enjoyment, blocks light and therefore limits desirable plant growth. Many other pollutants (bacteria, metals and some nutrients and toxins) attach to sediments. When sediments enter water, they carry other pollutants along with them.

Pick Up The Phone

City of Medford Resources

→	Business License	774-2025
→	Stormwater Information	774-2600
→	Stormwater Rate/Billing Information	774-2100
→	Pollution Complaints/Stormwater Discharge Violations	774-2600
→	Stormwater System Maintenance	774-2600
→	Disposal to the Wastewater Collection System	774-2750

Hazardous Waste/Disposal Alternatives

- *Emergency Spills:*
City of Medford 9-1-1
- *Hazardous Waste:*
See the Telephone Yellow Pages
- *Recycling Services:*
See the Telephone Yellow Pages
- *Discharge Permits:*
Oregon State Department of Environmental Quality 776-6010/X246
Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant 774-2750
- *Storage Considerations:*
City of Medford Fire Marshall's Office 774-2318
- *Technical Assistance:*
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality 776-6010X246