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Fact Sheet 2.5

Stormwater Phase II Final Rule

Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Minimum Control Measure

Stormwater Phase II Final Rule Fact Sheet Series

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This fact sheet profiles the Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination minimum control measure, one of six measures the operator of a Phase II regulated small municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) is required to include in its stormwater management program to meet the conditions of its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. This fact sheet outlines the Phase II Final Rule requirements and offers some general guidance on how to satisfy them. It is important to keep in mind that the small MS4 operator has a great deal of flexibility in choosing exactly how to satisfy the minimum control measure requirements.

What Is An "Illicit Discharge"?

Federal regulations define an illicit discharge as "...any discharge to an MS4 that is not composed entirely of stormwater..." with some exceptions. These exceptions include discharges from NPDES-permitted industrial sources and discharges from fire-fighting activities. Illicit discharges (see Table 1) are considered "illicit" because MS4s are not designed to accept, process, or discharge such non-stormwater wastes.

Table 1

Sources of Illicit Discharges
Sanitary wastewater
Effluent from septic tanks
Car wash wastewaters
Improper oil disposal
Radiator flushing disposal
Laundry wastewaters
Spills from roadway accidents
Improper disposal of auto and household toxics

Why Are Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Efforts Necessary?

Discharges from MS4s often include wastes and wastewater from non-stormwater sources. A study conducted in 1987 in Sacramento, California, found that almost one-half of the water discharged from a local MS4 was not directly attributable to precipitation runoff. A significant portion of these dry weather flows were from illicit and/or inappropriate discharges and connections to the MS4.

Illicit discharges enter the system through either direct connections (e.g., wastewater piping either mistakenly or deliberately connected to the storm drains) or indirect connections (e.g., infiltration into the MS4 from cracked sanitary systems, spills collected by drain outlets, or paint or used oil dumped directly into a drain). The result is untreated discharges that contribute high levels of pollutants, including heavy metals, toxics, oil and grease, solvents, nutrients, viruses, and bacteria to receiving waterbodies. Pollutant levels from these illicit discharges have been shown in EPA studies to be high enough to significantly degrade receiving water quality and threaten aquatic, wildlife, and human health.

What Is Required?

Recognizing the adverse effects illicit discharges can have on receiving waters, the Phase II Final Rule requires an operator of a regulated small MS4 to develop, implement and enforce an illicit discharge detection and elimination program. This program must include the following:

- ❑ A storm sewer system map, showing the location of all outfalls and the names and location of all waters of the United States that receive discharges from those outfalls;
- ❑ Through an ordinance, or other regulatory mechanism, a prohibition (to the extent allowable under State, Tribal, or local law) on non-stormwater discharges into the MS4, and appropriate enforcement procedures and actions;
- ❑ A plan to detect and address non-stormwater discharges, including illegal dumping, into the MS4;
- ❑ The education of public employees, businesses, and the general public about the hazards associated with illegal discharges and improper disposal of waste; and
- ❑ The determination of appropriate best management practices (BMPs) and measurable goals for this minimum control measure. Some program implementation approaches, BMPs (i.e., the program actions/activities), and measurable goals are suggested below.

Does This Measure Need to Address All Illicit Discharges?

No. The illicit discharge detection and elimination program does not need to address the following categories of non-stormwater discharges or flows unless the operator of the regulated small MS4 identifies them as significant contributors of pollutants to its MS4:

- ❑ Water line flushing;
- ❑ Landscape irrigation;
- ❑ Diverted stream flows;
- ❑ Rising ground waters;
- ❑ Uncontaminated ground water infiltration;
- ❑ Uncontaminated pumped ground water;
- ❑ Discharges from potable water sources;
- ❑ Foundation drains;
- ❑ Air conditioning condensation;
- ❑ Irrigation water;
- ❑ Springs;
- ❑ Water from crawl space pumps;
- ❑ Footing drains;
- ❑ Lawn watering;
- ❑ Individual residential car washing;
- ❑ Flows from riparian habitats and wetlands;
- ❑ Dechlorinated swimming pool discharges; and
- ❑ Street wash water.

What Are Some Guidelines for Developing and Implementing This Measure?

The objective of the illicit discharge detection and elimination minimum control measure is to have regulated small MS4 operators gain a thorough awareness of their systems. This awareness allows them to determine the types and sources of illicit discharges entering their system; and establish the legal, technical, and educational means needed to eliminate these discharges. Permittees could meet these objectives in a variety of ways depending on their individual needs and abilities, but some general guidance for each requirement is provided below.

The Map

The storm sewer system map is meant to demonstrate a basic awareness of the intake and discharge areas of the system. It is needed to help determine the extent of discharged dry weather flows, the possible sources of the dry weather flows, and the particular waterbodies these flows may be affecting. An existing map, such as a topographical map, on which the location of major pipes and outfalls can be clearly presented demonstrates such awareness.

EPA recommends collecting all existing information on outfall locations (e.g., review city records, drainage maps, storm drain maps), and then conducting field surveys to verify locations. It probably will be necessary to walk (i.e., wade through small receiving waters or use a boat for larger waters) the streambanks and shorelines for visual observation. More than one trip may be needed to locate all outfalls.

Legal Prohibition and Enforcement

EPA recognizes that some permittees may have limited authority under State, Tribal or local law to establish and enforce an ordinance or other regulatory mechanism prohibiting illicit discharges. In such a case, the permittee is encouraged to obtain the necessary authority, if possible.

The Plan

The plan to detect and address illicit discharges is the central component of this minimum control measure. The plan is dependant upon several factors, including the permittee's available resources, size of staff, and degree and character of its illicit discharges. As guidance only, the four steps of a recommended plan are outlined below:

❶ Locate Problem Areas
EPA recommends that priority areas be identified for detailed screening of the system based on the likelihood of illicit connections (e.g., areas with older sanitary sewer lines). Methods that can locate problem areas include: visual screening; water sampling from manholes and outfalls during dry weather; the use of infrared and thermal photography, cross-training field staff to detect illicit discharges, and public complaints.

❷ Find the Source
Once a problem area or discharge is found, additional efforts usually are necessary to determine the source of the problem. Methods that can find the source of the illicit discharge include: dye-testing buildings in problem areas; dye- or smoke-testing buildings at the time of sale; tracing the discharge upstream in the storm sewer; employing a certification program that shows that buildings have been checked for illicit connections; implementing an inspection program of existing septic systems; and using video to inspect the storm sewers.

❸ Remove/Correct Illicit Connections
Once the source is identified, the offending discharger should be notified and directed to correct the problem. Education efforts and working with the discharger can be effective in resolving the problem before taking legal action.

❹ Document Actions Taken
As a final step, all actions taken under the plan should be documented. This illustrates that progress is being made to eliminate illicit connections and discharges. Documented actions should be included in annual reports and include information such as: the number of outfalls screened; any complaints received and corrected; the number of discharges and quantities of flow eliminated; and the number of dye or smoke tests conducted.

Educational Outreach

The Center for Watershed Protection and Robert Pitt (2004) researched the most cost-effective and efficient techniques that can be employed to identify and correct inappropriate discharges. Data from Montgomery County, Maryland, was analyzed and it was determined that staff identify and correct about six inappropriate discharges per year as a result of regular screening. By contrast, over 185 inappropriate discharges are corrected each year in Montgomery County as a direct result of citizen complaints and calls to a storm water compliant hotline. Public education and labeling of outfalls and other storm drain infrastructure is an important element of establishing a successful citizen hotline. Outreach to public employees, businesses, property owners, the general public, and elected officials regarding ways to detect and eliminate illicit discharges is an integral part of this minimum measure.

Suggested educational outreach efforts include:

- Developing ***informative brochures, and guidances*** for specific audiences (e.g., carpet cleaning businesses) and school curricula;
- Designing a program to ***publicize and facilitate public reporting*** of illicit discharges;
- ***Coordinating volunteers*** for locating, and visually inspecting, outfalls or to stencil storm drains; and
- Initiating ***recycling programs*** for commonly dumped wastes, such as motor oil, antifreeze, and pesticides.

What Are Appropriate Measurable Goals?

Measurable goals, which are required for each minimum control measure, are intended to gauge permit compliance and program effectiveness. The measurable goals, as well as the BMPs, should reflect the needs and characteristics of the operator and the area served by its small MS4. Furthermore, they should be chosen using an integrated approach that fully addresses the requirements and intent of the minimum control measure.

EPA has developed a Measurable Goals Guidance for Phase II MS4s that is designed to help program managers comply with the requirement to develop measurable goals. The guidance presents an approach for MS4 operators to develop measurable goals as part of their stormwater management plan. For example, an MS4 could establish a measurable goal of responding to all complaints received by the citizen complaint hotline within 24 hours to minimize water quality impacts or recurrent dumping. A complaint tracking system could be used to log response and enforcement activity.

The educational outreach measurable goals for this minimum control measure could be combined with the measurable goals for the Public Education and Outreach minimum control measure (see Fact Sheet 2.3).

Sources

Center for Watershed Protection and R. Pitt. 2004. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination: A Guidance Manual for Program Development and Technical Assessments. Center for Watershed Protection, Ellicott City, MD, and University of Alabama, Birmingham, AL.

Maryland Department of the Environment, Water Management Administration. 1997. *Dry Weather Flow and Illicit Discharges in Maryland Storm Drain Systems*. Baltimore, Maryland.

U.S. EPA Office of Water. 1993. *Investigation of Inappropriate Pollutant Entries into Storm Drainage Systems: A User's Guide*. EPA/600/R-92/238. Washington, D.C.

Wayne County Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project. 1997. *Guidance for Preparing a Program for the Elimination of Illicit Discharges*. Wayne County, Michigan.

For Additional Information

Contacts

☞ U.S. EPA Office of Wastewater Management
http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater
Phone: 202-564-9545

☞ Your NPDES Permitting Authority. Most States and Territories are authorized to administer the NPDES Program, except the following, for which EPA is the permitting authority:

Alaska	Guam
District of Columbia	Johnston Atoll
Idaho	Midway and Wake Islands
Massachusetts	Northern Mariana Islands
New Hampshire	Puerto Rico
New Mexico	Trust Territories
American Samoa	

☞ A list of names and telephone numbers for each EPA Region and State is located at http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater (click on "Contacts").

Reference Documents

☞ EPA's Stormwater Web Site
http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater
- Stormwater Phase II Final Rule Fact Sheet Series
- Stormwater Phase II Final Rule (64 *FR* 68722)
- National Menu of Best Management Practices for Stormwater Phase II
- Measurable Goals Guidance for Phase II Small MS4s
- Stormwater Case Studies
- And many others

☞ Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination: A Guidance Manual for Program Development and Technical Assessments
http://www.cwp.org/iddc_verify.htm