

# EPA Guidelines

## Carpet and upholstery cleaning wastewater disposal

Updated January 2004

*EPA 214/04: This guideline replaces the earlier guideline EPA 214/03 'Carpet and upholstery cleaning wastewater'. It offers a brief description of the impact carpet cleaning wastes have on the environment as well as advice on how to comply with the relevant legislation.*

### Introduction

Regular cleaning of carpets is now widely practised in homes and commercial premises to prolong the life of carpets and to ensure that living and working areas are hygienic.

Wastewater from carpet cleaning usually contains detergents, other potentially hazardous chemicals and extracted carpet residues. These materials are listed as pollutants in the *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2003* (Water Quality Policy). Therefore, if this wastewater is not correctly handled the person carrying out the activity may be fined or issued with an environment protection order.

These guidelines are designed to encourage a strong environmental ethic in the industry and to prevent disposal of wastewater to drains which discharge into rivers, lakes and wetlands. They will also help you to comply with the Water Quality Policy. The first line of defence against water pollution rests with the individual efforts of people generating pollutants.

### Legislation

The principal legislation addressing pollution in South Australia is the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (the Act). In particular, section 25 imposes the general environmental duty on all persons undertaking an activity that may pollute to take all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent or minimise any resulting environmental harm.

The new *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2003* (Water Quality Policy) offers the most specific protection for the state's waters. It prohibits the pollution of the stormwater system and our natural waters. The Water Quality Policy has general obligations with which every person, business and industry must comply, as well as specific obligations for particular activities. Failure to comply with any of these obligations may result in the issuing of a \$300 fine, environment protection order, and/or prosecution.



Clause 17 of the Water Quality Policy states that a person must not discharge or deposit a pollutant listed in Schedule 4 of the policy *into any waters or onto land where it might enter any waters*. The pollutants listed in Schedule 4 include: carpet or upholstery cleaning waste, cleaning agents, detergents and their byproducts, and solvents.

For more information on the Water Quality Policy visit the EPA website at [www.epa.sa.gov.au](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au) or telephone (08) 8204 2004.

## Environmental impact

- Any wastewater tipped into street or other stormwater drains may make its way into sensitive waterways that support aquatic plants and animals. Carpet cleaning chemicals and other residues in carpet cleaning wastewater may damage the fragile ecosystems.
- Some carpet-cleaning agents are directly toxic to aquatic life.
- Some cleaning chemicals act as nutrients that, if they enter waterways, can promote excessive algal growth.
- Other residues from carpet cleaning can add to nutrient loadings and may themselves be toxic under certain circumstances.
- Explosive growth of algae can threaten plant and animal life in our wetlands, rivers and streams.

**Note: Floors that have been sprayed with pesticide should not be cleaned for at least four weeks.**

## Disposal of carpet cleaning wastewater

Wastewater and residues from carpet cleaning **must not** be discharged into any roadside gutter or drain, stormwater drain, well, bore, dam or watercourse.

Wastewater and residues from carpet cleaning **must not** be discharged onto the ground where they may soak into groundwater or run off into wetlands or streams.

### ***In sewered areas***

Wastewater and residues should be discharged to a sewer or STEDS (septic tank effluent disposal scheme), after seeking approval from the relevant authority.

### ***In non-sewered areas***

Wastewater and residues from carpet cleaning should be retained in the collection tank or transferred to a suitable container, then transported to an authorised sewage discharge point for proper disposal.

Alternatively, wastewater and residues may be evenly distributed over land provided that:

- the disposal area is at least 50 m from any well, bore, dam or watercourse identified as:
  - a blue line on a current series 1:50,000 Department for Environment and Heritage topographic map

**or**

- any river, stream, creek or channel in which water is contained or which flows permanently, intermittently or occasionally.

- the disposal area does not have slopes in excess of 20% (1 in 5).

Wastewater should never be discharged onto land that is rocky, subject to flooding, poorly drained or waterlogged.

## Currency of these guidelines

These guidelines offer advice to assist with compliance with the general environmental duty and specific environmental policies. They are subject to amendment and persons relying on the information should check with the EPA to ensure that it is current at any given time.

## Further information

### *Legislation*

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: [www.parliament.sa.gov.au/dbsearch/legsearch.htm](http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/dbsearch/legsearch.htm)

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Government Information Office  
Lands Titles Office  
101 Grenfell Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 13 23 24  
Internet: [shop.service.sa.gov.au](http://shop.service.sa.gov.au)

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