

NDOT trying to curb private runoff onto public roads

Nevada Department of Transportation wants the public's help when it comes to runoff flowing onto state roads.

Illicit discharge is anything entering a roadway drainage system that is not natural stormwater, according to NDOT. This includes pesticides, construction dirt or materials, as well as materials from neighboring properties and roadway runoff containing fertilizers, vehicle oil and chemicals.

Legislation allows NDOT to issue permits for certain water discharges onto state roadways, as well as assess fines if needed.

"It's important to remember that, in much of Nevada, any water reaching a storm drain directly enters our water system or natural environment with no filtration," Steve Cooke, NDOT environmental division chief, said in a press release. "We want to educate and work side-by-side with community members to keep that water as clean as possible. It's about helping to preserve water quality for everyone in Nevada."

Illicit discharges may be reported by calling 775.888.7013 with the location and type of drainage or discharge.

Tips to reduce water pollution:

- Keep your car in good repair. Leaking vehicle oil and chemicals can be transported into local waterways with stormwater runoff.
- Recycle used oil and antifreeze at service stations and other recycling centers. Never put used oil or other chemicals down storm drains or in drainage ditches. (One quart of oil can contaminate up to 2 million gallons of drinking

water.)

- Used vehicle batteries should be disposed of at appropriate recycling centers and not as general refuse. Spent vehicle batteries contain acid and heavy metals and therefore need to be disposed of properly. Do not store them outside where they can be exposed to precipitation and stormwater runoff.

- When washing your vehicles, take them to a commercial car wash facility. Wash water from vehicle washing can contain a variety of pollutants, including detergents, oils and grease, salts and dirt. Car wash facilities drain their wastewater into sewer systems, so it gets treated before it is discharged back into the water system.

- Perform vehicle maintenance inside or under cover whenever possible. Immediately clean up spilled vehicle fluids, solvents and other chemicals to prevent water and soil contamination.

- Be aware that many chemicals commonly used around the home are toxic. Apply household chemicals per manufacturer recommendations. Use non-toxic substitutes and low-phosphate or phosphate-free detergents whenever possible.

- Fertilizers contain nutrients that can degrade local waterways and readily leach through the soil. Take care not to over-fertilize and avoid spreading fertilizer onto areas that are subject to stormwater runoff. Sweep up fertilizer that ends up on your driveway or sidewalk areas. Avoid overwatering your landscaped areas where excess runoff can transport these nutrients into the storm drain system.

- Never pour unwanted chemicals on the ground or down the drain. Soil cannot purify most chemicals, and they could eventually contaminate runoff. Take them to hazardous-waste collection centers instead.

- Keep storm gutters and drains clean of leaves and yard trimmings. Decomposing vegetative matter leaches nutrients and can clog storm systems and result in flooding.
- Clean up pet waste on a regular basis. Pet waste can be a source of bacteria and other pathogens in our waterways if exposed to stormwater runoff.