
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Management of Carpet Cleaning Wastewater

Why is the Disposal of Carpet Cleaning Wastewater Regulated?

Water from washing carpets at residential and commercial locations may contain a wide range of contaminants, including detergents, solvents, disinfectants, suspended solids, grit and carpet fibers. If a carpet cleaner discharges these contaminants to the ground surface or surface waters, they can degrade water quality and threaten aquatic life.

It is illegal to discharge wastewater to a waterbody, e.g., a lake, stream, river or wetland, or to a storm drain or drainage swale leading to a waterbody, without first obtaining the appropriate federal permit(s).

What are the Wastewater Disposal Options?

Owners and operators of carpet cleaning businesses are responsible for properly managing carpet cleaning wastewater and have two main disposal options: discharging to a municipal sanitary sewer system (preferred) or to a subsurface disposal system.

1. Discharging to municipal sanitary sewers

Before discharging any wastewater to a municipal sanitary sewer system, permission must be obtained from the local municipal sewer authority (public works department or wastewater treatment facility). Wastewater discharge regulatory programs are individually developed by each municipality and may have widely varying requirements. Certain municipalities may require the discharger to submit a permit application and/or perform analytical testing of the wastewater before discharging to the sewer. Some municipalities may also request information pertinent to cleaning activities at residential/commercial sites within their service areas.

2. Discharging to subsurface wastewater disposal systems (septic systems)

Before discharging to a septic system, the wastewater must meet certain conditions and these discharges must be registered by completing a "Registration and Notification Form for Floor Drains and Discharges to Groundwater." This registration and supporting information is reviewed by DES to ensure that the discharge of wastewater onto or into the ground does not cause the contamination of groundwater, which is New Hampshire's primary source of drinking water. DES allows such discharges only when they are properly registered. A single blanket registration may be issued to cover all of a carpet cleaner's activities for residential customers. However discharges from commercial customer locations and carpet cleaning business locations must be registered individually. In some instances a yearly summary of commercial activities and discharges may be required by DES. For additional information,

please see fact sheet WD-DWGB-22-9, "[Protecting Groundwater from Floor Drains and Other Typical Discharges.](#)"

For subsurface discharges

- No solvents or other chemical contaminants (regulated contaminants) that could contaminate groundwater are allowed.
- The volume of wastewater to be discharged should be evaluated with respect to the safe design capacity of the subsurface disposal system.
- If in doubt about the acceptability of a subsurface discharge, and direct disposal to a municipal sanitary sewer is not possible, consider making arrangements with a municipal sanitary sewer authority for trucked waste disposal.

Important Points to Keep in Mind

- For each job, know what is in the carpet cleaning solution and the resulting nature of the wastewater generated from the service.
- Carpet cleaning wastewater cannot be allowed to discharge to surface waters or wetlands without first obtaining a federal discharge permit.
- Carpet cleaning wastewater cannot be allowed to run off onto ground surfaces (lawns, driveways, roadways).
- For discharge to a sewer, contact the local municipal sewer authority to determine where there is access to a sanitary sewer. Roof drainage lines, roadside gutters, and drains in parking lots and streets do not connect to sanitary sewers. Interior building drains may also lead directly to surface water and, if so, should not be used.
- Discharge to a sanitary sewer through a manhole violates most local sewer use ordinances and is also prohibited unless specifically authorized.
- Cleanup costs for contaminating groundwater can easily run into tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars. Preventing groundwater contamination is the property owner's responsibility, and if contamination were to occur, the property owner or other responsible party would be liable for cleanup costs.

For Additional Information

For more information on proper management of carpet cleaning wastewater discharges to groundwater, please visit www.des.nh.gov, click on "A to Z list" and choose "Groundwater Discharges," or call (603) 271-2858. For discharges to municipal wastewater treatment facilities, please contact the local sewer authority or the DES Water Division at (603) 271-3908. For information concerning discharging to surface water contact the DES Water Division (603) 271-3908.

For additional information, please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov or visit the DES home page at www.des.nh.gov, click on "A to Z list" and choose "Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau." All of the bureau's fact sheets are on-line at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/index.htm>.

Note: This fact sheet is accurate as of June 2010. Statutory or regulatory changes or the availability of additional information after this date may render this information inaccurate or incomplete.