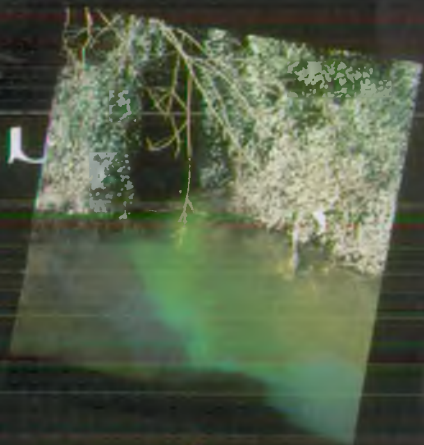


NRA WATER QUALITY 16

During 1994, 35,291 pollution incidents were reported to the NRA. 25,415 were later substantiated. These figures show a small increase in the number of incidents, while the environmentally damaging Category 1 (Major) incidents fell from 331 to 229, a decrease of 31%.



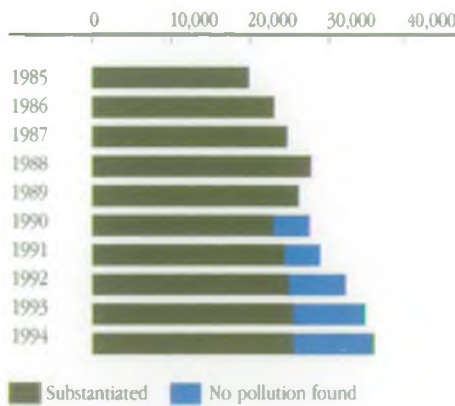
NRA

*National Rivers Authority*

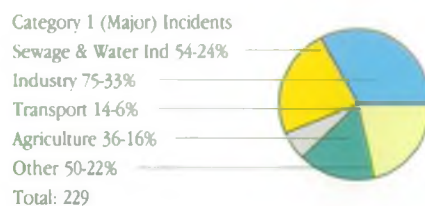
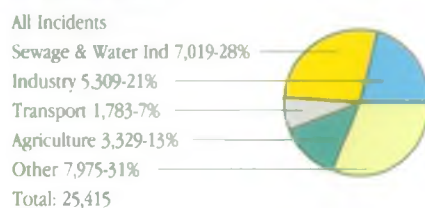
Guardians of  
the Water Environment

# During 1994, 35,291 pollution incidents were reported to the NRA.

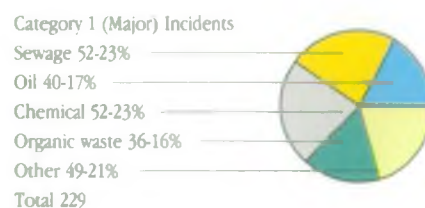
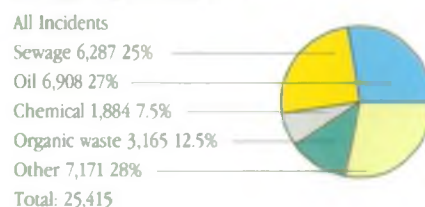
**Total number of pollution incidents in England & Wales, 1984-1994**



**Distribution of substantiated pollution incidents by source, 1994**



**Distribution of substantiated pollution incidents by type of pollutant, 1994**



## Introduction

During 1994, 35,291 pollution incidents were reported to the NRA. 25,415 of these were later substantiated. These figures reflect a small increase in the number of incidents, while the most environmentally damaging Category 1 (Major) incidents fell from 331 to 229, a decrease of 31%.

There are several likely reasons for these latest changes. The increase in reporting levels is due to the introduction of the NRA's pollution hotline, which has increased public awareness of pollution incidents and made it easier to report them. The reduction in "major" incidents provides strong evidence that the NRA's pollution prevention measures and messages are taking effect. The most dramatic falls in "major" incidents were seen in the agricultural (43% fall) and industrial sectors (32% fall), both of which have been directly targeted by NRA pollution prevention initiatives in recent years.

## Sources

Pollution incidents have been categorised by both source of pollution and type of pollutant. By source, the sewage and water industry accounted for the greatest proportion (28%) of incidents, followed by industrial (21%) agricultural (13%) and transport (7%) incidents. The remaining 31% were from a variety of other sources including premises such as domestic properties, restaurants, hotels and schools. Of the incidents from the sewage and water industry, the privatised Water Company surface water outfalls and combined sewer overflows accounted for the greatest number of incidents. The construction industry was the greatest source of industrial incidents, whilst dairy farming activities were the biggest source of agricultural pollution.

## Types

By type of pollutant, oil (27%) accounted for the largest number of incidents. Sewage accounted for 25%, organic waste 12.5% and chemicals 7.5%. Inert suspended solids were the most common pollutant of the remaining 28% that could not be classified into the above categories. Diesel was the most common oil identified, whilst cattle slurry was the predominant organic waste. Paints and dyes (principally from dye tracing of sewers) were the main chemical pollutants.

## Examples of Pollution Incidents

### Chromic Acid Pollution

On 23rd March 1994 the NRA were informed of a spillage of 7,000 litres of chromic acid solution at the premises of



Diesel Marine International UK Ltd on the West Chirton Industrial Estate, North Shields.

Investigations showed that the spillage occurred when the acid solution was being transferred from an outside holding tank to an ion-exchange unit within the factory. At some point, (it is not clear how), the tap on the holding tank fractured, allowing the contents to be discharged onto the yard area. The solution entered a nearby surface water gully which eventually discharges via a Public Surface Water Sewer into the Albert Edward Dock. The impact of the discharge on the water in the dock was immediately visible as a marked orange coloration which



*This document contains a summary of information published in the NRA's Annual report on pollution incidents for 1994. The full report is available from HMSO No ISBN 011 3101023 or through local bookshops at £15.00*  
 HMSO Publications Centre  
 PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT  
 Telephone orders: 0171 873 9090

spread quickly. (See photograph.) There was also a localised drop in the pH levels. The long term impact is difficult to assess at this stage. The chromium and other metals present will have settled into the sediment on the bed of the dock. There are future proposals to dredge and fill part of the dock. It is not clear if the chromium concentrations in the sludge will be so high as to make future disposal more difficult. Diesel Marine UK Ltd was subsequently convicted and fined £5,000.

#### **Air Crash**

Prompt action by NRA staff following a Midlands air tragedy averted a major pollution incident. Following the crash of a Viscount aircraft at Stowe-by-Chartley, between Stafford and Uttoxeter, a NRA pollution control officer arrived on the scene at 11.45pm. The crash occurred only 3km upstream of a major potable water supply reservoir serving parts of the Black Country. The officer called upon the resources of the NRA's in house emergency workforce who worked through the night to install an oil boom to prevent the oil entering the nearby Stoney Brook. Due to the boggy nature of the area the boom had to be left in place for several months as the oil seeped through the ground, but no significant river pollution occurred.

#### **Prosecutions**

Prosecutions were brought for 237 incidents and 222 were successfully convicted. At 1st April 1995, there were 151 outstanding cases to be brought before the courts. The highest fine awarded for an incident was £30,000 for an oil pollution incident in Welsh Region.

#### **Freephone Number**

1994 was the first full year of operation of the NRA's national freephone number which aims to simplify contacting the NRA in an emergency. The number, 0800 80 70 60, can be used for the reporting of all environmental incidents, including pollution, poaching, flooding or any sign of damage or danger to the water environment. The line is manned 24 hours a day at the eight regional control rooms and received some 30,000 calls in 1994.



#### **Pollution Prevention.**

The NRA is putting considerable efforts into pollution prevention, and into raising public awareness of water pollution. 1994 saw a number of major pollution prevention initiatives including the production of a short video on pollution prevention, aimed at small to medium size companies, which was launched in September. Over 6,000 copies of the video have been distributed and are being used in a wide range of companies for everything from staff training to briefings for management.

Another significant initiative was the Oil Care Campaign, which was launched in January 1995 and aims to educate the end users of oil - industry and the general public. An Oil Care Code has been drawn up to give simple advice on the delivery, storage, handling and disposal of oil. A database listing waste oil banks available to the general public has been set up, together with a freephone service, the Oil Bank Line on 0800 663366, which members of the public can ring to find the location of their nearest oil bank.

The reduction  
in "major"  
incidents  
provides strong  
evidence that  
the NRA's  
pollution  
prevention  
measures and  
messages are  
taking effect.



OIL BANK LINE  
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*NRA Water Quality 16*



**N R A E M E R G E N C Y H O T L I N E**

**0800 80 70 60**

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The NRA is committed to the principles of stewardship and sustainability. In addition to pursuing its statutory responsibilities as Guardians of the Water Environment, the NRA will aim to establish and demonstrate wise environmental practice throughout all its functions.

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