



river pollution

and how to avoid it



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

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ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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THE POLLUTION PROBLEM

The battle against pollution concerns all of us. This leaflet is designed to help you to help us safeguard the water environment.

As England and Wales have become more and more urbanised, with increasing numbers of industrial sites, homes and businesses, considerable strain has been placed upon our natural environment.

One, very serious result of this is the increasing number of pollution incidents. Rural areas are also under the threat of pollution. Many serious pollutions originate from farms.

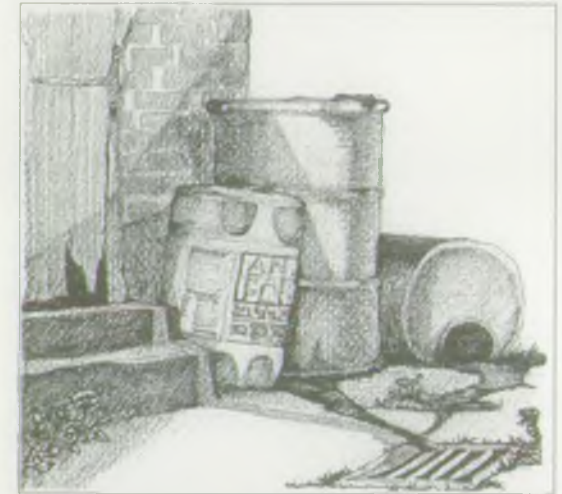


Unbanded storage tanks

And, it is not only rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and coastal waters which are at risk from pollution. Pollutants can also seep through the ground and threaten underground water.



Leaking silage store



Spillage near a surface water drain

There are many sources of pollution. Large industrial estates pose a potential risk but so do smaller sites, such as car parks, petrol stations, and garages. Pollution can be caused deliberately, or through negligence, by accident or vandalism and the results can be catastrophic. Drinking water and irrigation supplies can be put at risk, the entire wildlife population of a river can be wiped out.

Those responsible can face criminal prosecution and a massive clean-up bill.

Our lives depend upon a healthy water system. It is in all our interests to ensure that river pollution does not happen.

HOW DO RIVERS BECOME POLLUTED?

Pollutants find their way into rivers and other natural waters via two main routes:

Drainage from land

Many polluting substances find their way into water courses by indirect means, such as run-off from farmland. Combating this kind of pollution calls for care in the use of agricultural chemicals, and the spreading of slurry and in the avoidance of accidents.



Engine oil poured down drain

Discharges from pipes and sewers

Foul water from homes and factories is passed to sewage works or in some cases industrial effluent treatment works where it is treated. The effluent is then discharged into a watercourse with the consent of the NRA. These discharges are monitored to ensure that they meet the standards set.

Surface water sewers are specially designed to carry rainwater direct to streams and rivers, without any treatment as they should only be carrying harmless surface water. Problems occur when the surface water systems become contaminated either through wrong connections or through acts of negligence or vandalism.

THE NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY

Who are we?

The NRA is an independent public body charged with safeguarding and improving the natural water environment. Alongside pollution control, we are responsible for flood defence, regulating rivers and groundwaters, protecting and improving fish stocks and promoting water based recreation of all types. We are committed to improving wildlife habitats and conserving the natural environment in everything we do.

What do we do?

The NRA keeps a regular check on river water quality. Anyone discharging effluent into rivers must obtain legal permission from us first in the form of a 'discharge consent'. The effluent is monitored regularly to check that it is up to standard. Pollution officers are also on call to cope with pollution incidents and the resulting clean-up operations.

Although the NRA has strong powers of prosecution when rivers are polluted, we firmly believe that prevention is better than cure. Our aim is to make everyone aware of the risks to our rivers and of the steps that can be taken to prevent pollution. Pollution control officers regularly visit industrial estates and other business premises to see what measures are being taken and to advise owners and managers if anything further needs to be done.

All pollution is an offence under the Water Act 1989 and polluters can be prosecuted. The NRA is available to give help and advice at any time. Get in touch with us and take action before it's too late.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- x Don't put oil, petrol or garden chemicals down drains or into gutters
- x Don't throw rubbish into rivers or streams
- x Don't allow any potentially polluting matter to escape into rivers or streams or the drainage system



Spillages during delivery of chemicals

- ✓ Do ask for advice if you are not sure how to dispose of a potential pollutant
- ✓ Do report any suspected pollution immediately to us
- ✓ Do tell us if you have a spillage of a potential pollutant

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