

EXAMPLES OF ILLICIT DISCHARGES

FOAM



The foam in streams can be caused by natural sources and is usually nothing to worry about. However, failed septic systems, chemical spills, or soaps can also cause foam to appear on the surface of the water. Foam can pile up to several inches thick on the water surface and spread over a large area. Soap or detergent foam is usually a bright white color with a soapy smell.

Natural foam is not a problem and does not need to be reported. Natural foam is usually light tan or brown in color, but can also be white. It has an odor that can be described as “fishy”, “earthy” or like “freshly cut grass”.

FAILED SEPTIC SYSTEMS



When a septic system fails, wastewater is released from houses and businesses before it receives full treatment. The most noticeable effect of a failing septic system is the smell at the point of surfacing effluent. Improperly treated wastewater contains high levels of pathogens that can cause diseases in humans who contact the water.

FARM ANIMAL MANURE



Uncovered manure piles or areas where animal wastes have been allowed to accumulate are sources of pollutants. Animal waste contributes high amounts of bacteria and nutrients to ground and surface waters. Animal waste contains bacteria that are harmful to humans. In addition, manure contains a high level of organic material that provides nutrients to algae and aquatic plants as it decomposes. More growth of plants in the water reduces the amount of dissolved oxygen that the fish receive.

STORMWATER CONTAMINATED WITH PAINT



Paint and paint rinse water can enter storm drains and carry untreated pollutants directly to sensitive streams. All paints contain toxins such as heavy metals and solvents. These chemicals can harm fish and other aquatic life in streams and rivers.

DUMPING YARD WASTE IN STREAM



Dumping yard waste or plant materials into storm inlets or streams can create blockages to waterways. Excess vegetation can trap sediments and block the streambed, causing flooding.

POOLS & SPAS



Pools and spas contain chemicals that are harmful to streams. Releasing large amounts of chlorinated water into storm drains can change the pH of the water and lead to erosion. Pools and hot tubs should only be drained when a test kit does not detect chlorine levels and the water is cooled to air temperature. When possible, drain pools to a sanitary system.

CHEMICAL SPILLS



Chemicals can cause a variety of adverse effects when they are leaked to a stream. Always try to use the least hazardous products when possible. Keep the lids secure at all times and store in a well ventilated area. Incompatible chemicals should be kept away from each other. Signs that indicate a chemical spill might have occurred include discoloration of the water, strange odor, and sightings of waste cans or barrels.

For a chemical spill of any size, call the IDEM Emergency Response line at **(888)233-7745**

SPILLS DURING FLOODING



During heavy rains and floods, pollutants can be washed into surface waters.

Report oil and chemical spills to IDEM's 24-hour toll free spill line at **(888) 233-7745**

PETROLEUM AND OIL



Fats, oil, grease and petroleum are all detrimental to streams. They are toxic to aquatic wildlife and they can block storm and sanitary sewer lines when the products solidify. Additionally, they can attract pests and deplete the oxygen in streams.

Some of the ways of identifying if oil or grease has made it into the storm system are an oil slick or sheen on the surface, greasy solids accumulating on storm sewer grates or ditches, distressed vegetation, petroleum or food odors, or blocked or slow draining pipes.