

Do You Know Where Your Floor Drains Go?

Floor drains are found in most facilities, including manufacturing, auto service, dry cleaning and printing operations. It is very important that facility operators can identify floor drain discharge location(s) and are aware of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and sanitary sewer system regulations.

If your facility has floor drains and you are uncertain about the discharge location, or you suspect floor drains are being improperly used for waste disposal, you could be polluting nearby surface or ground waters. The discharge location for each floor drain must be confirmed as the floor drain system may have more than one discharge location. Confirmation can be made by reviewing facility "as built" drawings or by conducting a dye test. Be aware that dye tests may only be conducted by professionals with the proper MDEQ permit.



When commercial property is sold or refinanced, illegally connected floor drains are often discovered. Lenders and purchasers often require environmental assessments to evaluate if the property is contaminated. Eliminating illegal floor drain connections can reduce expensive cleanup costs later.

Floor drains **MUST** conform to one of the following or be taken out of service immediately:

- 1. The floor drain system discharges to the sanitary sewer system.** If floor drains discharge to a sanitary sewer system you may be subject to the sewer system's regulations. You must contact the sewer system and discuss your site activities, as you may be required to obtain a permit or conduct pretreatment activities prior to discharging. Pretreatment activities remove waste materials that a sewer system is not typically designed to treat, such as oils, chemicals or heavy metals.
- 2. The floor drain system discharges to an onsite holding tank.** If your floor drains discharge to a holding tank, the tank must be pumped by a properly licensed waste transporter. The waste must be properly characterized and disposed of at an approved facility.
- 3. The floor drain system discharges under permit to waters of the state.** Waters of the state include rivers, streams, lakes, ditches, storm drains or marshes. Any facility that wants to discharge to waters of the state must have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the MDEQ. An NPDES permit typically includes discharge limits, record keeping, reporting and monitoring, and may require pretreatment prior to discharge. For further information on NPDES permits, visit the MDEQ website at www.michigan.gov/deq or contact the MDEQ Jackson office at (517) 780-7690.

Keep the following in mind to help protect the environment:

- Demonstrate consistent good housekeeping and spill prevention practices to prevent accidental releases from entering floor drains. Keep a good supply of absorbent materials on hand to contain accidental spills.
- Keep water use to a minimum when cleaning floors. Use biodegradable floor detergent in accordance with the manufacturer's directions. Do not use solvents or other harsh chemicals to clean floors.
- Minimize or eliminate the use of solvents and degreasers where possible. Degreasers put oil into a solution, which makes it nearly impossible to remove the oil from the wastewater by conventional methods and oil/water separators.
- Weighted, rubber spill control mats or temporary plugs are available to cover and protect floor drains from undesirable discharges.
- If floor drains are not needed, they may be taken out of service by plugging with concrete.



Washtenaw County Environmental Health
Pollution Prevention Program
705 N. Zeeb Rd., P.O. Box 8645
Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8645
(734) 222-3800
www.ewashtenaw.org