

# WATER QUALITY

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### **Q: What is the Difference between wastewater and stormwater?**

A: In the Las Vegas valley, there are two systems of drainage. The sanitary sewer system and the storm sewer system. The sanitary sewer system takes household wastewater (such as from sinks, toilets, dish washers and washing machines) and carries it through a home's plumbing and into an underground sewer pipe to a wastewater treatment plant for processing and treatment.

The Storm Sewer System carries the runoff discharge from various ground surfaces and rain events onto city streets and routes it into curb side catch basins. This untreated stormwater runoff carries many pollutants, including leaves, sediment, cigarette butts, pet waste, oils/grease, fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals, to the Las Vegas Wash and ultimately Lake Mead.

### **Q: Why is stormwater Important?**

A: Improving stormwater quality is a long-term process involving educating residents and businesses about preventing stormwater pollution at its source and treating stormwater before it enters our waterways. Cleaner stormwater provides us with new opportunities for stormwater harvesting and reuse. This helps us to protect our precious water reserves.

## **Frequently Asked Questions by Residents**

### **Q: Is stormwater runoff treated before it reaches Lake Mead?**

A: Stormwater does not flow through a wastewater treatment plant (this is common practice

nationwide due to the expansive cost to ratepayers). This underscores the importance of preventing illicit discharges into storm drains (including street gutters). Local stormwater regulations can be found in Chapter 14.18 of the Las Vegas Municipal Code.

### **Q: Is pet waste harmful to the environment?**

A: Yes, pet waste is harmful as the bacteria loading from large population areas can result in excessive algae formation.

### **Q: Can I put used cooking oil down my sink if I use hot water?**

A: No, as it will clog the sewer line and cause a sewage backup. During the holiday season, drop-off locations for used cooking oil are set up at locations throughout the valley. During the non-holiday season, it can be soaked up with cat litter and disposed of it in the garbage, or taken to Republic Service's [Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off Locations](#). For additional information, visit [www.paininthedrain.com](http://www.paininthedrain.com).

### **Q: Where can I drain my swimming pool?**

A: Swimming pools discharges should be directed into the property's sanitary sewer cleanout. The sewer cleanout is typically a 3-inch plastic pipe (capped) protruding near ground level in front of the residence. It sometimes becomes buried in landscaping and may need to be located by a licensed plumber or pipe contractor and a new port installed. If the cleanout cannot be located, or if the residence has a septic system, the city may grant permission (one-time only for properties connected to sanitary sewer) to discharge swimming pool water into the street gutter. Requests for such discharges should be directed to the city's environmental officer at [EOS@lasvegasnevada.gov](mailto:EOS@lasvegasnevada.gov) or 702-229-7318.

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**Q: Where can I clean my swimming pool filters?**

A: Swimming pool filters can be cleaned in a landscaped area that retains the sediment and prevents runoff. Filters cannot be cleaned in the street gutter unless the filter residue or sediment is captured to prevent it from entering the street and storm drain.

**Q: Can I pour used paint down the drain?**

A: Leftover paint should never be poured down the drain. It can be disposed of at Republic Service's [Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off Locations](#).

**Q: Where can I clean my paint brushes/rollers?**

A: Brushes and rollers should never be cleaned in the street gutter (prohibited by Chapter 14.18 of the Las Vegas Municipal Code). They can be cleaned in a household sink, but only for latex paint. Brushes and rollers covered in oil-based paints must be cleaned in a separate container and can be disposed of at Republic Service's [Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off Locations](#).

**Q: Where can I dispose of used automotive oil?**

A: Used automotive oil can be recycled at most auto parts stores, or at Republic Service's [Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off Locations](#).

**Q: How can I properly dispose of household hazardous waste?**

A: Most household hazardous waste can be disposed of at Republic Service's [Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off Locations](#).

**Q: Where can I report illegal dumping of solid waste (garbage)?**

A: Illegal dumping of solid waste garbage should be reported to the [Southern Nevada Health District Solid Waste Division](#).

**Q: Where can I report dumping or discharges of liquid wastes into the street or storm drain?**

A: Dumping of liquid wastes into the street or storm drain should be reported to the city of Las Vegas Environmental Compliance Section [ECS@lasvegasnevada.gov](mailto:ECS@lasvegasnevada.gov) or 702-229-6594.

**Q: Where can I report sediment discharge from a construction site into the street or storm drain?**

A: Sediment discharge or debris originating from construction activities and enters into the street or storm drain should be reported to the city of Las Vegas environmental officer [EOS@lasvegasnevada.gov](mailto:EOS@lasvegasnevada.gov) or 702-229-7318.





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### Frequently Asked Questions for Businesses

**Q: What is pretreatment and why does the city have a pretreatment program?**

A: Pretreatment refers to the Federal Pretreatment Program established in Chapter 40, Part 403 of the Code of Federal Regulations. It regulates industrial and commercial wastewater discharges into the sanitary sewer system. The purpose of pretreatment is to protect the city's wastewater collection and treatment system, sewer workers and receiving stream water quality that flows into Lake Mead.

**Q: Does my business require a Wastewater Control Permit?**

A: It depends on the business activity. Typical permittees include facilities with large wastewater flows, manufacturing facilities, automotive shops, medical & dental offices, dry cleaners, laundries, pesticide businesses, machine shops and printers.

**Q: Who determines what facility is permitted and what the permit responsibilities are?**

A: The city of Las Vegas Environmental Compliance Section issues permits and enforces discharge regulations. As part of your Business Licensing process, applicants will submit an application for a Class II Wastewater Contribution Permit and an Environmental Compliance Inspector will make the determination if a permit is required for the business.

**Q: Where can I find commercial/industrial sewer discharge regulations?**

A: Wastewater discharge regulations are codified in Chapter 14.17 of the Las Vegas Municipal Code.

**Q: What types of industrial users are regulated under the pretreatment program?**

A: Industrial users regulated under the pretreatment program include facilities that discharge more than 25,000 gallons per day of process wastewater, are subject to Federal Categorical Discharge Standards, or have a reasonable potential (either alone or in combination with discharges from other industries) to adversely affect the wastewater treatment or collection system or receiving stream water quality.

**Q: What type of pollutants are regulated?**

A: Everything from Arsenic to Zinc (and everything in-between). Concentration-based standards are listed in Section 14.17.130 of the Las Vegas Municipal Code. LVMC 14.17 also specifies numerous narrative discharge standards.

**Q: What are the maximum pollutant concentrations for industrial sanitary sewer discharges?**

A: Maximum pollutant concentrations for each parameter can be found in Section 14.17.130 of the Las Vegas Municipal Code.

**Q: How are industrial sanitary sewer discharge limits derived?**

A: Sanitary sewer discharge limits are technically based. Factors include percentage of industrial flow, treatment plant processes, sludge disposal method, and receiving stream standards.

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**Q: Am I required to sample/analyze my facility's wastewater?**

A: Class I facilities are typically required to sample and analyze their wastewater (as specified in their permits). Class II facilities are typically not required to sample and analyze wastewater but must comply with all discharge regulations.

**Q: Do Wastewater Control Permits expire?**

A: Class I permits (larger facilities) expire after five years. Class II permits typically do not expire. Temporary permits (groundwater) expire after two years.

**Q: What happens if an Industrial User does not comply with pretreatment program requirements?**

A: Responses vary depending upon the severity of the violation. Facilities are typically required to resample and, if necessary, install appropriate pretreatment to bring them into compliance. Administrative Penalties can also apply.

**Q: Does my business need a grease or sand/oil interceptor?**

A: Most food service establishments, automotive facilities, and car washes are required to install interceptors. The determination is made by the city. Interceptor maintenance is regulated by the Environmental Compliance Section.

**Q: How do I properly maintain my interceptor?**

A: Maintenance and pumping frequency vary by facility. Maintenance requirements are specified in Section 14.17.210 of the Las Vegas Municipal

Code. Interceptors are required to be pumped at least annually, and the solids accumulation cannot exceed 25 percent of each chamber's operative fluid capacity at any time.

**Q: How can I properly dispose of groundwater originating from dewatering activities associated with facility basements and/or elevator shafts, or construction projects?**

A: Depending upon the proposed volume and pollutant concentrations, groundwater can be approved for discharge into the sanitary sewer under a Temporary Wastewater Control Permit. Questions should be referred to the Environmental Compliance Section [ECS@lasvegasnevada.gov](mailto:ECS@lasvegasnevada.gov) or 702-229-6594. Groundwater can also be discharged into the waters of the state under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit. Questions should be referred to the [Nevada Division of Environmental Protection](#).

