

## Do You Know Where Your Floor Drains Go?

Floor drains are found at many small businesses such as dry cleaners, printers, manufacturing businesses and auto service companies. A common floor drain system includes a concrete trench which runs down the center of a shop floor. The trench is designed to capture water, cleaners, oil, dirt or other materials. Some shops have small rectangular or round floor drains connected to underground piping.

Some floor drains are necessary for day-to-day operations. Others are used for emergency purposes only. And, some floor drains don't seem to have any apparent use. *Do you know where the floor drains in your business go? Are you discharging wastewater or other fluids into your floor drains?*



It is very important that you know where all your floor drains lead and are aware of Ohio EPA's regulations that apply to your discharge activities. If you do not know where your drains lead or if you are using floor drains improperly, you could be contaminating nearby surface waters or ground waters.

Some floor drains lead into a sanitary sewer, where wastewater goes directly to a public wastewater treatment plant. Other floor drains lead to an onsite sewage treatment system like a septic tank. Sometimes, floor drains lead directly to an underground holding tank or discharge to a waterway or to the ground outside. Ohio EPA's water pollution control regulations apply to all of these activities.

### Discharges to a Wastewater Treatment Plant

A business that discharges industrial wastewater directly to a public owned treatment works (also called a POTW) is subject to wastewater regulations. Often, the POTWs directly regulate the companies that discharge to them.

A large POTW may easily be able to handle the wastewater generated from your business. However, even large wastewater treatment plants are not generally designed to handle industrial wastes like chemicals, metals, oils, etc. They are designed to handle sewage-related wastes and wastewaters. Because of this, the treatment plant may require you to conduct "pretreatment" (e.g., removal of metals, oil or grease, etc.) before discharging your wastewater to them.

If your floor drains discharge to a POTW, you must contact and discuss your activities with them. You may be required to obtain a permit from the POTW for the discharge. If the POTW does not have an approved pretreatment program, a permit may be needed from Ohio EPA. You may be required to treat the wastewater before it is discharged. The construction of a wastewater treatment unit requires a permit-to-install (PTI) from Ohio EPA *before* you begin construction.

**Note:** You should NOT discharge industrial wastewater onto the ground outside your facility! Make sure your floor drains don't lead outside where wastewater could end up on the ground.

### Discharges to Waters of the State

Any company that wants to discharge an industrial wastewater to waters of the state needs to get a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from Ohio EPA. Examples of waters of the state include streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, marshes, waterways, wells and springs.

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Wastewater discharges entering a conveyance system (like a ditch or storm sewer) that leads to a water of the state can also be subject to NPDES permitting.

The NPDES permit typically includes discharge limits and other requirements such as record keeping, reporting and monitoring. Other conditions of the NPDES permit can require a company to treat wastewater to remove harmful contaminants before it is discharged. The construction of a wastewater treatment unit requires a PTI from Ohio EPA before you begin construction.

If your floor drains lead to any water of the state, you **MUST** have a discharge permit from Ohio EPA for this activity. Contact the Division of Surface Water at your local Ohio EPA district office for more information on NPDES permits.

### Important Points to Remember...

- Check all your floor drains and make sure you know where they drain to.
- If you are using floor drains to discharge industrial wastewater into an injection well system such as a dry well or septic tank, you need to stop these discharge activities. You must find another way to manage your wastewater or obtain an Underground Injection Control permit from Ohio EPA.
- Make sure your floor drains **DO NOT** discharge industrial wastewater onto the ground. This discharge activity is illegal and you must find another way to manage the wastewater.
- If you are using floor drains to discharge industrial wastewater to waters of the state and you do not have a permit, you must stop these discharge activities. This includes discharges into storm sewers. You must find another way to manage your wastewater or obtain an NPDES permit from Ohio EPA for the discharge.
- If you are using floor drains to discharge wastewater to a local wastewater treatment plant, make sure the treatment plant knows about this activity. You may be required to treat the wastewater before discharging it. You may also need to get a permit for the discharge.
- **DO NOT** put other fluids like oil, solvents, paints or chemicals into a floor drain. This could contaminate your property and expose you to large fines and cleanup costs.



Make sure you are **NOT** discharging wastewater to waters of the state unless you have an NPDES permit for the discharge.



**DON'T** handle waste or chemicals in areas where spills could enter a floor drain. This solvent parts washer is located right next to the floor drain.

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## Ohio EPA District Offices

### Central District Office

50 W. Town St., Suite 700  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(614) 728-3778  
Fax: (614) 728-3898  
Non-Emergency Complaints:  
(800) 686-2330  
[epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx](http://epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx)

### Northeast District Office

2110 E. Aurora Rd.  
Twinsburg, OH 44087  
(330) 963-1200  
Fax: (330) 487-0769  
Non-Emergency Complaints:  
(800) 686-6330  
[epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx](http://epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx)

### Northwest District Office

347 N. Dunbridge Rd.  
Bowling Green, OH 43402  
(419) 352-8461  
Fax: (419) 352-8468  
Non-Emergency Complaints:  
(800) 686-6930  
[epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx](http://epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx)

### Southeast District Office

2195 Front St.  
Logan, OH 43138  
(740) 385-8501  
Fax: (740) 385-6490  
Non-Emergency Complaints: (800) 686-7330  
[epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx](http://epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx)

### Southwest District Office

401 E. Fifth St.  
Dayton, OH 45402  
(937) 285-6357  
Fax: (937) 285-6249  
Non-Emergency Complaints: (800) 686-8930  
[epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx](http://epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx)



Toll-free numbers are for citizens with questions or concerns about environmental issues. The regulated community should use the business line for routine business. Spills and emergencies should be reported to (800) 282-9378.