Trade waste in the motor vehicle repair industry

Trade waste from the motor vehicle repair industry is usually generated by cleaning of engines, parts, vehicles or workshop floors. It may contain contaminants such as fuels, solvents, heavy metals, battery acids, flammable substances, caustic cleaners, coolants, paints, fillers, grit and residue. If not properly managed, this wastewater can pollute our waterways, damage our sewerage systems, and affect the health and safety of our people and the community.

City of Gold Coast (City) manages trade waste discharges from businesses in the motor vehicle industry to ensure that these contaminants do not enter our sewerage system or the environment.

What is trade waste?
Trade waste is the liquid waste from any industry, business, trade or manufacturing premises, other than domestic sewage from a hand basin, bath, toilet or other domestic fixture.

For the motor vehicle repair industry, trade waste generally includes fuels, solvents, coolants, paints and other chemicals.

Do I produce trade waste?
Businesses within the motor vehicle repair industry generate, or have the ability to generate, trade waste. These businesses include:

- auto parts recyclers
- car detailers
- engine/gearbox rebuilders
- motor mechanics
- panel beaters
- radiator repair workshops
- service stations
- spray painters
- steam cleaners/degreasers
- transport depots
- vehicle service centres

You produce trade waste if you generate liquid waste from a business activity and:

- discharge into the sewerage system
- discharge to the storm water system or onto land
- store on-site for collection for off-site recycling, reuse or disposal
- have a wash down area the discharges into the sewerage system or holding tank.

Why manage trade waste?
Uncontrolled or illegal discharge of trade waste causes serious problems in the sewerage system including flooding and overloading, blockages, corrosion, hazardous work environments, even failure of sewage purification processes.

Never pour oil down the drain. One litre of oil can contaminate up to one million litres of water.

The City is responsible for preventing these contaminants from entering the sewerage system, ensuring that the health and safety of the community and the environment are protected.

If you produce trade waste, you must have a trade waste approval before discharge to sewer.
What is a trade waste approval?

A trade waste approval is a legal contract between the property owner, the trade waste customer and the City. All trade waste producers must have a trade waste approval issued by the City.

Do I need a trade waste approval to discharge trade waste into a holding tank?

Yes, all trade waste producers must have a trade waste approval, regardless of where they are discharging their trade waste to. The trade waste approval includes the terms and conditions you must abide by, including the limit of substances or contaminants in your trade waste discharge.

Can I reduce the amount of contaminants in my trade waste?

There are a range of pre-treatment devices that businesses in the motor vehicle repair industry can use to separate oil and other contaminants from water, allowing the water to be safely discharged to the sewerage system.

If you install an oily water separator, a minimum size 1000 litre in-ground holding tank is required prior to a coalescing plate and vertical gravity separators being installed.

Oily water separation and pre-treatment options include:

- coalescing plate separators
- vertical gravity separators
- membrane technology
- dissolved air flotation (DAF)
- chemical precipitation
- hydro cyclones
- other authorised apparatus or methods.

Will I pay a trade waste charge?

All businesses that generate trade waste and discharge to the sewerage system will pay for the amount of water that they discharge. Further charges may be applicable, depending on the amount of contaminants in your trade waste.

For more information on trade waste, visit our website, cityofgoldcoast.com.au/tradewaste or contact us on 1300 000 928.

Don’t forget

- Washing vehicles, degreasing motors, parts cleaning and other activities generate sewage. Sewage must not be allowed to drain to stormwater drains, street gutters or any waterway (even when washing with water only).
- All washing and cleaning should be carried out within a wash bay that is either connected to the sewer under a trade waste agreement or fitted with a water treatment and recycling system.
- Hand-washing should be carried out over a sink that is connected to the sewer system, not under an outside tap where run off to the environment may occur.
- Dilution of trade waste is prohibited – it wastes water and increases the chances of flooding the sewerage system.
- Installing bunds will repel rainwater and prevent accidental spills escaping to the sewer or stormwater system.
- Capture and store separately radiator fluids, waste brake fluids, motor oils, solvents, paints, degreasers and fuels in drums for collection by a licensed transport operator.
- Install a pre-treatment device to reduce the quantities of silt, oil, grease, and petroleum hydrocarbons entering the sewer.
- Use pressure cleaners and quick break detergents to wash floors, large parts and engine bay