

Frequently Asked Stormwater Questions/Answers

The City of Salinas Permit Center has been enforcing NPDES Permit requirements since the late 1990s and guiding applicants through the regulatory process. The Permit requirements may change from time to time. Following are questions often asked by applicants.

Q1: I am not adding any more impervious surface (i.e. roof/traditional pavement & sidewalk) than I had before the project. Do I still need to comply with the stormwater Permit?

A1: All projects creating and/or replacing impervious and/or managed turf (traditional lawn) surfaces must comply with the Permit. The CCRWQCB sees new projects as an opportunity to improve on the existing quantity and quality of stormwater runoff by replacing existing impervious and/or managed turf areas with PCBMPs such as pervious pavement/pavers, drought resistant plantings that do not require excessive applications or fertilizer and/or pesticides or other forms of PCBMPs.

Q2: Can I wash my own car at my house?

A2: Yes. The City requires that you use a hose end shut off nozzle (SCC36A-3(4)), pressure washer or similar methods to reduce water use/runoff and direct the resultant runoff into landscape planters, lawns or other pervious areas where the runoff has a chance to soak into the ground and not run off into the street gutter. Using commercial car washes that recycle the wash water is also a good option.

Q3: Do I need a permit for a public car wash for a fund raiser?

A3: Yes. A special events permit shall be obtained from the City Parks/Community Recreation Department (831-758-7217). The City will require you to wash vehicles on landscaped areas (just for the event) or capture the wash water and direct it into landscaping or seal off storm drain inlets with plastic, capture the water and empty it into the sanitary sewer. Commercial car washes are required to recycle their water and direct any contaminated water to the sanitary sewer system.

Q4: Do I need an engineer to design my project?

A4: If your project will increase the amount of impervious area resulting in more runoff than before, change the existing grades, change the direction of site runoff flows or similar impacts, a grading plan prepared by a California registered civil engineer and/or California registered Land Surveyor shall be provided.

Q5: If I create and/or replace impervious and/or managed turf over 50% of the site, are there any other requirements that apply?

A5: If your project impacts at least 50% of the total site area then the entire site must comply with the applicable SWDS as if the entire site were disturbed.

Q6: How much of the site do I have to dedicate to PCBMPs to meet the SWDS/Permit requirements?

A6: Every site is different but a general rule of thumb is to reserve 10% of the site for PCBMPs such as bioretention planters. A design professional familiar with the Salinas NPDES Permit and SWDS can assist you with the project.

Q7: LID and the terminology are new to me. Where do I find the definitions?

A7: In the SWDS immediately after the table of contents.

Q8: What is allowed in the storm drain system?

A8: Per Permit Section A.:

5) Non-Stormwater Discharges - Discharges of material other than stormwater to Waters of the U.S. or another MS4 are prohibited except as allowed under this Section or unless such discharges are authorized by a separate NPDES permit. The following categories of non-stormwater discharges are not prohibited provided any significant pollutant discharges and significant impacts are identified and appropriate control measures are implemented to minimize identified significant pollutant discharges and impacts of such discharges:

a) Diverted stream flows;

b) Rising ground waters;

c) Uncontaminated ground water infiltration [as defined by 40 CFR section 35.2005(20)];

d) Uncontaminated pumped groundwater;

e) Foundation drains;

f) Springs;

g) Water from crawl space pumps;

h) Footing drains;

i) Air conditioning condensation;

j) Flows from riparian habitats and wetlands;

k) Water line flushing;

l) Discharges from potable water sources;

m) De-chlorinated or de-brominated swimming pool water;

n) Individual residential car washing;

o) Incidental Runoff from landscape irrigation and lawn watering; and

p) Incidental Runoff of irrigation water.

6) Discharges or flows from fire-fighting activities are excluded from the non-stormwater discharge prohibition and need only be addressed where they are identified as significant sources of pollutants to Waters of the U.S.

Q9: Where do I call to report someone dumping oil or other things that are not clean stormwater into a drain inlet?

A9: Call 831-758-7233 (City DPW Maintenance Yard) and tell the operator the location and time of the incident and any other information that might identify the offender.

Q10: Do schools and other agencies within the City limits need to comply with the City Permit and SWDS?

A10: Yes, except for County of Monterey sites within the City limits, as determined by CCRWQCB staff since Monterey County is a Phase II entity with similar Permit requirements which must be followed. See Salinas Stormwater Development Standards (SWDS) and Related Requirements (9/24/13)" for additional information.