North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Oil Spill Information

NC Surface Water Quality Standards 15A NCAC 02B .0211

(2) Conditions Related to Best Usage

- The waters shall be suitable for aquatic life propagation and maintenance of biological integrity, wildlife, secondary recreation, and agriculture
- Sources of water pollution which preclude any of these uses on either a short-term or long-term basis shall be considered to be violating a water quality standard

(3)(f) Oils

- Only such amounts as shall not render the waters injurious to public health, secondary recreation or to aquatic life and wildlife or adversely affect the palatability of fish, aesthetic quality or impair the waters for any designated uses
- Shall include but not be limited to substances that cause a film or sheen upon or discoloration of the surface of the water or adjoining shorelines

NC Surface Water Quality General Statutes

Article 21A: Oil Pollution & Hazardous Substances Control

Oil Discharge Controls

It shall be unlawful... for any person to discharge, or cause to be discharged, oil or other hazardous substances into or upon any waters, tidal flats, beaches, or lands within this State, or into any sewer, surface water drain, or other waters that drain into the waters of this State, regardless of the fault of the person having control over the oil or other hazardous substances, or regardless of whether the discharge was the result of intention or negligent conduct, accident or other cause

Photo courtesy of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, photo by Chris Reddy

Violations of State Water Quality Rules and Regulations Can Result in the Assessment of Civil Penalties

- Oil and hazardous waste may carry penalties of up to $5,000 per day
- Illegal discharges may carry penalties of up to $25,000 per day
- Stream standard violations that coincide with spills may carry penalties of up to $25,000 per day

Photo courtesy of FBI

Photo courtesy of EPA

Photo courtesy of Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council

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Photo courtesy of WWF

Photo courtesy of the city of Colorado Springs

Photo courtesy of Keith Meyers/ New York Times

Did you know...?

- It only takes one drop of oil to contaminate 50 gallons of fresh water
- Improperly disposed oil from one vehicle's routine oil change can contaminate a million gallons of fresh water
- Oil in runoff from land, municipal, and industry waste makes up the majority of oil pollution in oceans (approximately 100 times the amount of oil from big spills or major tanker accidents)
- Oily runoff from a city of 5 million people, over one year could contain as much oil as a large tanker spill
- Oil discharged to storm drains can contaminate streams, rivers, and lakes

Handling Oil Spills

- A person that has control over petroleum that is discharged into the environment must immediately take measures to collect and remove the discharge
- No chemicals or treatment materials which may be detrimental to the environment or natural resources may be used to contain, treat, or disperse the discharge

Photo courtesy of DWQ

Report Oil Spills Within 24 Hours To DENR Regional Office

(Or NC Emergency Management if after normal business hours)

- Any spill ≥ 25 gallons
- Any spill regardless of amount that causes a sheen on surface waters
- Any spill regardless of amount that occurs within 100 feet of surface waters
- Any oil spill < 25 gallons that cannot be cleaned up within 24 hours

Regional Office Contact Information

Asheville	(828) 296-4500
Mooresville	(704) 663-1699
Winston-Salem	(336) 771-5000
Raleigh	(919) 791-4200
Fayetteville	(910) 433-3300
Wilmington	(910) 796-7215
Washington	(252) 946-6481
NC Emergency Management	(800) 858-0368

Photo courtesy of Oliver Gouldthorpe