

Toolbox talks: pollution prevention

Cement and concrete

What?

- cement and concrete are probably the most common materials used in construction
- cement is a highly alkaline material and is corrosive
- if cement or concrete is allowed to enter a watercourse in an uncontrolled manner, it can have a devastating effect on wildlife.

Why?

- **avoid environmental harm:** water contaminated with cement is highly alkaline and can be toxic to fish, plants and animals living in watercourses
- **avoid environmental harm:** cement particles entering a watercourse can clog fishes' gills and destroy their spawning grounds
- **avoid prosecution:** it is illegal to allow cement, unset concrete or washout water containing cement to enter a watercourse or drain.

Note that special permission is needed before construction work can take place in a watercourse.



Questions

- 1 Where are the designated washout areas on this site?
- 2 Where can bagged cement be stored on this site?
- 3 What should be done if any potential pollution incidents are seen?

Do

- ✓ be aware of all watercourses, gullies and drains before starting work
- ✓ store bulk and bagged cement and concrete additives at least 10 m away from watercourses, gullies and drains
- ✓ undertake mixing/batching works well away from watercourses, gullies and drains
- ✓ ensure watercourses, gullies and drains are protected from any nearby concreting works
- ✓ ensure special mixes are used for underwater concreting works
- ✓ use only designated areas for concrete washout and ensure concrete delivery drivers are aware of where they are

- ✓ where necessary, protect nearby drains against washout water running into them
- ✓ notify a line manager **IMMEDIATELY** if any concrete spillages or concrete washout are seen likely to cause pollution.

Don't

- ✗ hose down spills of concrete or cement into watercourses, gullies and drains
- ✗ allow washout water to flow into watercourses, gullies or drains
- ✗ allow ready-mix trucks to washout anywhere other than in areas designated for the purpose
- ✗ wash off any tools or plant in watercourses.