

# Fire Sprinkler Maintenance



**F**ire sprinkler systems can be a source of chemical pollutants – such as corrosion inhibitors, fire suppressants and antifreeze – as well as a transporter of pollutants already on the ground. These pollutants are hazardous to San Diego residents and toxic to our environment.

## Control, Contain, Capture

When conducting maintenance on fire sprinkler systems, you **MUST** have a plan to control, contain, capture and dispose of the water you release to prevent it from entering the stormwater conveyance system, which includes nearby curb gutters, streets, alleys, ditches and storm drains.



- ◆ **Control:** Before starting the job, determine where the fire system water will drain and how you will block, direct and collect it. Obtain all necessary permits and authorizations for wastewater disposal. Use dry cleanup methods first, such as using a broom, vacuum, absorbent material or scraper.
- ◆ **Contain:** Never let fire sprinkler water leave your work area. Isolate the flow using containment pools, berms, buckets or booms to contain the water. Collect water in a permanent or temporary capture facility.
- ◆ **Capture:** Collect the fire sprinkler water using a wet vacuum, vacuum boom, bucket or vacuum pump. Sweep up any visible solids and sediments remaining after all the sprinkler water has been collected. Properly dispose of polluted water and debris.
- ◆ **Dispose:** Fire sprinkler water can be drained onto landscaped areas provided it can be absorbed by the soil without erosion, runoff or soil contamination. It may also be disposed into the sanitary sewer system, such as an onsite sink, toilet or lateral cleanout with prior approval from the Public Utilities Department.



## STORMWATER REGULATIONS

It is illegal to discharge contaminated water from fire sprinkler maintenance activities into the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) (San Diego Municipal Code §43.0305(f)(1)). Penalties associated with these violations can be up to \$10,000 per day per incident.

## Other Considerations

Polluted runoff can be eliminated when proper methods are used to control, contain and capture fire sprinkler system water.

- ◆ Do not let fire sprinkler water leave your property when performing maintenance.
- ◆ Do not drain system on days when rain is forecasted.
- ◆ Systems containing corrosion inhibitors, fire suppressants or antifreeze must be collected and disposed of into the sanitary sewer system (on-site sink, toilet or lateral cleanout).
  - ◆ Contact the Industrial Wastewater Control Program at (858) 654-4100 to determine whether approvals are needed for sanitary sewer system disposal.
- ◆ Systems without corrosion inhibitors, fire suppressants or antifreeze (just water) should be collected and disposed of into the sanitary sewer system. If sanitary sewer system disposal is not possible:
  - ◆ Direct water to a landscaped area provided it can be absorbed by the soil without erosion, runoff or soil contamination.
  - ◆ If you cannot direct wash water to a landscaped area you must direct flows to a contained, paved area in order to collect water using a wet vacuum or equivalent, and dispose of the wash water properly. Allowing residual water to evaporate is an acceptable method of disposal only if the remaining residues are removed.
  - ◆ If the above methods fail, clean all trash, sediment and debris leading to the nearest storm drain and direct the flow through a mechanical filter (filter fabric or other water filtration media) before releasing it into the storm drain.
    - » Water must be colorless, odorless, at ambient temperature, and have a pH between 7-8.
    - » Water cannot contain chemicals, algae or debris.

These regulations apply, regardless of whether the activity is conducted by the property owner, lessee, contractor or other persons.



## Keep Pollutants Out of Storm Drains

Many people think that when water flows into a storm drain it is treated, but the storm drain system and the sanitary sewer system are not connected. Everything that enters storm drains flows untreated directly into our creeks, rivers, bays, beaches and, ultimately, the ocean. Stormwater often contains pollutants - including chemicals, trash and vehicle fluids - all of which contaminate our beaches and harm fish and wildlife.

Whether at home or work, you can help reduce pollution and improve water quality by using the above Best Management Practices as part of your daily cleaning and maintenance routine.

