



---

# CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

---

UW-Madison Environment, Health & Safety Department

Spring 2015

*When water from melting snow or rainfall flows across lawns and city streets it washes soil particles, pesticides, pet wastes, oil and other toxic materials into area lakes. This is known as "nonpoint source pollution." These pollutants can create weed-choked lakes, algae blooms and closed beaches.*

---

## The Problem

Erosion caused by land that has been cleared for construction is a source of sediment runoff. Iridescence in runoff is a sign of a gasoline or oil spill. What other construction factors or activities contribute to nonpoint source pollution and soil disruption?

- **Soil Erosion** is the most significant source of pollution in runoff. Gullies and mud-filled gutters indicate that water is running across the site fast enough to take dirt with it.
- **Construction Materials** such as pressure-treated lumber, concrete and solvents can leach into runoff, especially if left unprotected from the elements.
- **Petroleum Products** include fuel and lubricants for vehicles, power tools and general maintenance. Remember it only takes one quart of oil to contaminate two million gallons of drinking water.
- **Construction Chemicals** such as paint, sealers, concrete curing agents and cleaning solvents may contribute to water quality problems when stored or used where they may be in contact with rain or melted snow.

## What Can We Do?

If you are working on a project that disturbs soil, use silt fences or bales of straw to prevent sediment from leaving the site. If at all possible, try to divert runoff away from the bare area. When the project is completed, cover seed with mulch or use sod to prevent further erosion.

Construction materials, petroleum products and chemicals used during construction should be stored in a nearby building, under a tarp or in a temporary enclosure. Pallets under containers also prevent materials from absorbing moisture from the ground. If it looks like a material may be polluting nearby sources of water, contact the project manager for assistance.

**If a material is spilled, clean it up immediately to prevent it from entering the storm sewer. Contact the Environment, Health & Safety Department (EH&S) at 265-5000 for assistance in cleanup and for ideas to prevent the spill from recurring. Spills by a private contractor on UW property are the responsibility of the contractor, but EH&S should be notified.**

Can one person's actions make a difference? You bet! Together we can work to improve the quality of Madison-area lakes.

*For more information please contact:*

Marisa K. Trapp  
UW-Madison EH&S  
30 East Campus Mall  
Madison, WI 53715  
Email: [mtrapp@fpm.wisc.edu](mailto:mtrapp@fpm.wisc.edu)  
Phone: (608) 262-2407  
Web: <http://www.ehs.wisc.edu/environmentalcompliance.htm>