NetworkRail

Toolbox talk – Environment

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Silt What?

- □ silt is the term used for very fine particles of soil
- □ silt mixed with water in the form of mud, can be washed off construction sites into nearby watercourses and drains
- the biggest cause of pollution incidents is construction operations
- □ pollution by silt can be caused by:
 - rainwater runoff from uncovered areas of the topsoil stripped site
 - pumping out and dewatering of excavations
 - tunnelling operations and cleaning of ditches and drains.

Why?

- avoid environmental harm: high levels of silt suspended in water can suffocate fish by blocking their gills, can remove essential oxygen from the water, can kill plants, animals and insects living in the water by stopping sunlight reaching them
- avoid environmental harm: silt often combines with other contaminants such as oils and chemicals potentially causing greater pollution than silt alone
- avoid prosecution: because of the potential for harm, it is illegal to allow silt to enter a watercourse or drain. Silt pollution is easily traceable to the site from where it originated. In the past it has been a major cause of prosecution.

<u>Do</u>

- ✓ only discharge silty water into designated settlement systems
- check the site drainage and settlement systems are working discolouration may indicate high pollution loading
- stop pumping and contact a line manager if there is a problem arising
- ensure that all hardstandings are kept clean notify a line manager if an area is silty or is covered in mud
- notify a line manager immediately if silty water is seen entering a watercourse or drain. Do try to stop it or divert it away by, for example, using sand bags
- consider installing cut-off trenches or silt fences to prevent silty surface runoff
- monitor weather forecasts and plan work accordingly



Questions

- 1 Where are the suitable discharge locations at this site?
- 2 Where does surface discharge on this site go to?
- 3 What activities on this project could generate silt, dust or mud?
- regularly check watercourses that could be affected by dewatering operations or rainwater runoff
- ensure drain cleaning operations have systems in place to intercept polluted water.

<u>Don't</u>

- dewater any excavation without getting permission from a line manager
- pump silty water directly into rivers, ditches or surface water drains
- strip land of vegetation unless it is absolutely necessary vegetation reduces silt runoff
- store soil, stone or similar materials within 10 m of watercourses or drains
- dig a grip to release ponded water to a watercourse or drain.



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Name	Company	Signature

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For further information please contact a member of the Environment Team

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Date: