



Environmental Aspects of Carpet Cleaning

Office of Program Support

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Description:

- Carpets are cleaned in homes and offices to extend the lifespan of carpeting and maintain a clean living and working environment.
- During the carpet cleaning process, homeowners or professional carpet cleaners may use a blend of chemicals for odor control, carpet spot removal and rinsing agents.
 - Many of these carpet cleaning chemicals are toxic. Therefore, it is essential that the wastewater and solid waste (i.e. carpet fibers, dirt, hair, grit, etc.) generated from the cleaning process is disposed of by the appropriate method.

Environmental Impacts:

- Carpet cleaning becomes an environmental concern when the wastewater and solid waste generated from the cleaning process are discharged inappropriately into storm sewers, streets, septic systems, or directly onto the ground. The environmental concern is the greatest when the carpet cleaning wastewater contains toxic cleaning chemicals.
- Illegal discharges of carpet cleaning wastewater and associated solid waste contaminates the environment and can be harmful to human health, aquatic life, and wildlife habitat.
- It is illegal to discharge any carpet cleaning wastewater into storm sewers. If discharged into storm sewers, there is a high potential for contamination to surface waters. Storm sewers collect water outside of homes and buildings and can channel the untreated wastewater directly to waterways such as local lakes, creeks, streams, or rivers.
- If discharged onto the ground, the carpet cleaning chemicals from the wastewater can be carried by storm water into surface waters or into the soil and contaminate the groundwater and/or drinking water.

Disposal Options:

- With permission from the municipal wastewater treatment authority, professional carpet cleaners may discharge the wastewater generated by the cleaning process into a sanitary sewer connection. Solid waste should be filtered out prior to discharge and disposed of properly. The filtered solid material may be disposed of in the trash if it does not contain hazardous waste. Information on making a hazardous waste determination is available at www.idem.IN.gov/waste/files/hw_determination_process.pdf.
- Professional carpet cleaning businesses that use a septic system should contact the local health department to obtain permission and/or guidance prior to discharging to a septic system.
- If the carpet cleaning business is unable to discharge to a municipal sanitary sewer and is prohibited from discharging to a septic system by the health department, the professional carpet cleaner may seek permission to containerize and deliver the wastewater directly to the municipal wastewater treatment plant.
- Businesses may find it more economical to safely containerize the wastewater and have it picked up by a licensed septic hauler for disposal.

Laws and Regulations:

- Indiana Code 13-30-2-1 (Specific acts prohibited), Sec. 1. "A person may not discharge, emit, cause, allow, or threaten to discharge, emit, cause, or allow any contaminant or waste, including any noxious odor, either alone or in combination with contaminants from other sources, into the environment or publicly owned treatment works."
- If a spill occurs, then the requirements of Indiana's Spill Rule, per 327 IAC 2-6.1, must be implemented. These requirements include, but are not limited to:
 - The spill must be contained;
 - The spill must be reported; and

- The spill must be cleaned up immediately.
- Spills must be reported within two hours of discovery to IDEM's 24-Hour Emergency Spill Line toll free at 1-888-233-7745.

IDEM's Role:

- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for safe industrial, agricultural, commercial, and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy.

Industry's Role:

- Professional carpet cleaners should ensure that the carpet cleaning wastewater is disposed of by the appropriate method by training their employees on best management practices. These practices include:
 - Proper use of cleaning chemicals (including concentration, handling methods, knowing when to use chemicals, etc.).
 - Proper clean-up of chemical spills.
 - Proper disposal of the wastewater to avoid illegal discharges. (NEVER discharge wastewater into storm sewers, streets or on the ground.)
- Non-toxic or bio-degradable carpet cleaning products should be considered for use. While generally not as harmful to the environment, non-toxic and bio-degradable products are still harmful to aquatic life and require proper disposal.
- Any person who improperly discharges carpet cleaning wastes into the environment or publicly owned treatment works may be held responsible for cleanup costs, financial penalties and damages caused to the environment or public owned treatment works.

Citizen's Role:

- Wastewater and solid waste generated by non-commercial and residential carpet cleaning should be poured into a toilet, sink, or other drain connected to the sanitary sewer system in your home.
- Prior to discharging the wastewater, filter the wastewater to remove the solid waste. Carpet fibers, dirt, hair and grit contained in the carpet cleaning wastewater can clog pipes. The filtered solid material may be disposed of in household garbage if it is not contaminated with any household hazardous waste materials.
 - In general, household hazardous waste generated from the home is exempt from hazardous waste regulation. However, homeowners are still required to ensure proper disposal to ensure the waste does not pose a health threat or create a public nuisance. Individuals can be held liable for the misuse or illegal disposal of household generated waste.
 - Carpet cleaning products may be harmful to the septic system. Contact your local county health department for guidelines on disposal in septic systems.
- It is illegal to discharge any carpet cleaning wastewater onto the ground, into waters, or into storm sewers. To report an illegal discharge of carpet cleaning wastewater or known spill to IDEM's 24-Hour Emergency Spill Line toll free at 1-888-233-7745.
- For general complaints about carpet cleaning waste disposal, you may also contact the IDEM Complaint Clearinghouse using one of three methods:
 - Submit a complaint online at www.idem.IN.gov/contact/file-a-complaint/.
 - Call the IDEM Complaint Coordinator at 1-800-451-6027, Option 3.
 - Print, complete, and mail the "IDEM Complaint Form" to the address in the upper right-hand corner on page one of the form. You can find the form at <https://forms.IN.gov/Download.aspx?id=5693>.

More Information:

- For more information about Indiana's Spill Rule, please visit IDEM's website at www.idem.IN.gov/cleanups/investigation-and-cleanup-programs/emergency-response/.
- For more information about IDEM's confidential Compliance and Technical Assistance Program (CTAP), visit IDEM's Web site at www.IN.gov/idem/ctap or contact CTAP at 317-232-8172 or toll free at 1-800-988-7901.