Detailed guide: Preventing agricultural pollution in exceptional weather

You can cause soil damage and water pollution if you spread slurry or milk during exceptional weather or on unfavourable soil.

You must contact the Environment Agency if:

- your slurry or milk store is at risk of over flowing or leaking
- you cannot avoid spreading slurry or milk on agricultural land and there is a risk of slurry runoff, run-through to land drains or leaching
- you are at risk of breaching the legal requirements of:
  - nitrate vulnerable zones
  - storing silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil (SSAFO) rules
  - rules for farmers and land managers to prevent water pollution

You can only spread milk to land if you have a U10 waste exemption.

Definition of exceptional weather

Exceptional weather is weather that is not common, usual or reasonably expected. For example, the long exceptionally dry periods during the summers of 1976 and 2018.

It does not apply to weather that can be planned for. For example, wetter than average winter rainfall.

Contingency plan

You must have a contingency plan to avoid causing pollution during exceptional weather.

You must make sure that all your staff and contractors are aware of your contingency plan. It should include field inspections to consider the risk of slurry or milk getting into surface water or groundwater.

Work with neighbouring farms to create your contingency plan if possible.

Use the following hierarchy of options to make your contingency plan. 1 is the most favourable and 5 is the least favourable:

1. Store the slurry or milk at the place of production.
2. Store the slurry or milk at the place of use.
3. Dispose of the slurry or milk at an off-site anaerobic digestion plant or other effluent treatment plant, including at a sewage treatment works – milk can only go to permitted anaerobic digestion sites.
4. Store the slurry or milk off site.

5. Spread the slurry or milk on low run-off risk land.

Reducing the amount of slurry you produce

During exceptional weather you should reduce the amount of slurry (including lightly fouled water) you produce. You should:

- wash dairy parlours down with a low volume hose system (0.6 cubic metres per cow per month or 20 litres per cow per day)
- remove excess dung with a brush or squeegee before hosing down to reduce the amount of wash water you need to use
- keep animals on straw to produce solid manure rather than slurry
- divert uncontaminated surface water away from dirty yards
- keep or move livestock onto the smallest yard area necessary
- install, maintain or repair gutters and downpipes, especially on roofs that drain onto dirty yards
- consider covering exposed fouled yard areas

Temporary slurry storage

You must normally comply with SSAFO rules to store slurry.

However, the Environment Agency will waive the full SSAFO requirements if you want to store slurry for less than 12 months. You must only consider temporary storage where existing facilities are inadequate.

Temporary storage could include:

- reinstating disused stores
- reclaiming tanks
- new tanks
- earth bank lagoons
- lined lagoons
- slurry bags

To keep slurry in a temporary store you must:

- check planning requirements with your local planning authority
- contact the Environment Agency before construction
- agree each individual location with the Environment Agency
- install tanks, liners and slurry bags to manufacturer’s instructions
- make sure the base of earth bank lagoons is above the water table – there should be at least one metre of clay subsoil beneath the proposed base
- use a trial pit to confirm the depth of the clay layer – the resulting hole must be backfilled and puddled in
- use liners where there is doubt about soil permeability – lower grade liners should suffice for temporary storage but use high grade liners in high risk areas
- monitor it to make sure there are no leaks
- locate it at least 10 metres from watercourses and land drains – use temporary trial trenches if you’re unsure about the presence of land

drains
- locate it at least 50 metres from groundwater sources
- de-commission it as soon as it’s no longer needed

If you’re using shared facilities you must:

- consider any biosecurity risks
- agree management arrangements
- agree where responsibility lies

For more information about storing slurry see CIRIA: Livestock manure and silage storage infrastructure for agriculture.

How to spread slurry or milk

You must spread slurry or milk:

- thinly and widely
- at an application rate not exceeding 20 m3 per hectare – you must use a lower application rate if run-off could enter surface water

You must only spread slurry or milk on land with low run-off risk.

Low run-off risk land:

- has an average slope of less than 3 degrees
- does not have land drains other than sealed impermeable pipes
- has not been pipe drained, mole drained or sub-soiled in the last 12 months
- does not have a shallow soil less than 30cm above fissured rock
- has a sufficient depth and suitable type of soil above groundwater to prevent pollution
- is not within a designated groundwater source protection zone 1
- is at least 50 metres from surface water or a conduit leading to surface water
- is at least 50 metres from springs, wells and boreholes where groundwater is used for human consumption
- does not have compacted soil or a soil surface which is capped – you can only spread where the soil is permeable and has a good structure
- does not have cracked soil above a land drainage system or groundwater

If you mix slurry with milk you increase the risk of lethal or explosive gases such as methane, carbon dioxide, ammonia and hydrogen sulphide.

When the Environment Agency may not take enforcement action

When exceptional weather stops you being able to comply with legislation and guidance, spreading to land may be your only viable option. If you spread slurry and milk during exceptional weather without causing pollution, the Environment Agency may decide not to take enforcement action.

You must:

- contact the Environment Agency before you spread any slurry or milk to land
- agree with them that spreading is the only option available
- only spread the amount of slurry and milk you need to reduce the risk of pollution
- carry out spreading at a rate of ≤ 20m3 per hectare and on the lowest risk land available – you may be able to export the slurry and milk to neighbouring farms
- carry out regular checks before, during and after spreading to ensure there is no pollution taking place

You are still responsible for any pollution that you cause.

When to check back

This guidance will be reviewed by 31 October 2018. You will need to check back then to see if it still applies.

Contact the Environment Agency

General enquiries

National Customer Contact Centre
PO Box 544
Rotherham
S60 1BY

Email
enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Telephone
03708 506 506

Telephone from outside the UK (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm GMT)
+44 (0) 114 282 5312

Minicom (for the hard of hearing)
03702 422 549

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Call the environment incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 out of hours or in an emergency.

Press release: Anglers urged to take care when fishing during hot conditions

With the hot weather set to continue for the next few weeks, the Environment Agency and the Pike Anglers' Club (PAC) are asking people to take extra care while fishing to help protect vulnerable fish stocks.

Prolonged hot weather can cause problems in rivers, lakes and drains such as low oxygen levels, low river flows, elevated water temperatures and algal blooms, which in turn can lead to increased levels of stress on fish populations and even fish deaths in extreme conditions.

Steve Lane, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency said:

> The hot weather and high water temperatures can make life difficult for fish.
>
> We're asking anglers to take particular care while fishing as the dry weather continues to help us protect fish stocks.
>
> Please return fish to the water as quickly as possible and avoid using keepnets if practical to do so, particularly on lakes, the Broads and rivers with low flows.

Some species such as pike and barbel can be particularly vulnerable in hot conditions.

John Currie, General Secretary of the Pike Anglers' Club and Chairman of the Broads Angling Services Group's (BASG) Pike Strategy Group and Environment Sub Group, said:

> PAC would ask anglers to consider the conditions caused by the very hot weather before deciding to fish.
>
> The shallow waters of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, the Fens and the Somerset Levels are of particular concern, though we are also aware of problems further north.
>
> It's not just oxygen levels that can cause fish problems in warm conditions, so we urge anglers to think carefully before fishing.

Steve added:

> As ever, anglers can help us protect fish by reporting signs of dead or distressed fish, pollution or illegal fishing to the 24 hour Environment Agency Incident Hotline number 0800 80 70 60.

Anglers can find further advice and guidance from the Pike Anglers' Club.

Press release: Sewage effluent permit application for proposed Hinkley Point C

The Environment Agency has received an application for a permit to discharge treated sewage effluent during construction of the proposed nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C near Bridgwater, Somerset.

The application has been made by NNB Generation Company (HPC) Limited, a subsidiary of EDF Energy.
The company already has a number of environmental permits issued by the Environment Agency to operate the proposed Hinkley Point C nuclear power station on the North Somerset coast near Bridgwater.

The application is for the discharge of up to 1,150 cubic metres of treated effluent a day from a sewage treatment plant serving the campus construction welfare facilities that include wash basins, toilets, showers, a kitchen and a canteen, during the early stages of the construction at Hinkley Point C.

Domestic sewage effluent will be treated via a new British Standard sewage treatment plant before being pumped to the Severn Estuary. In order to minimise the impact on the receiving environment, the applicant proposes that the effluent will be subjected to disinfection by ultra violet irradiation before being discharged.

The applicant is proposing to discharge the effluent via an existing submerged outlet location near the seaward end of the Hinkley Point C jetty (known as Outlet 12).

People can view the permit application and submit comments online.

Comments can be made by email to psc-waterquality@environment-agency.gov.uk or by post, quoting application number EPR/XP3321GD/A001, by 5pm on 5 September 2018, to:

P&SC – WQ Team, Quadrant 2

99 Parkway Avenue

Sheffield

S9 4WF

This information is also held in a register at:

The Environment Agency

Public Register

Rivers House

East Quay

Bridgwater

TA6 4YS

You can look at our register 9.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Please phone the National Customer Contact Centre on 03708 506 506 to arrange an appointment. You may get a copy of documents on the register. We may charge to cover copying costs.

Normally we must put any responses we receive on the public register. Please tell us if you don't want your response to be public.

We must decide whether to grant or refuse the application. If we grant it, we must decide what conditions to include in the permit. Our guidance explains what factors are relevant to our determination.

Press release: Construction starts on North East flood scheme

Contractor Balfour Beatty is carrying out flood protection work across Monkton and Hebburn with work expected to be complete by the end of the year. It will protect around 100 homes and businesses from surface water flooding.

To minimise disruption, work that needs to take place close to local schools will be done during the school summer holidays, with construction in areas less affected by travel to and from school being completed in the autumn.

The main construction work follows a project in March this year to open up a section of the Bede Burn running underground – known as 'daylighting' – to the rear of Toner Avenue School. This was part of the 'Living Waterways'

scheme to restore the burn and create a green space for the community to enjoy.

The Monkton Flood Alleviation Scheme is being delivered by South Tyneside Council and its partners at the Environment Agency and Tyne Rivers Trust.

Main engineering work

Tom Pitman, Project Manager for the Environment Agency and South Tyneside Council, said:

> The work in the Spring to open up the Bede Burn and create a green space was really well received by the community and we're pleased it will be a great facility for them to use in the future.
>
> We're now on to the main engineering work which will include improved drainage, swales to collect surface water run-off and an attenuation basin which is designed to collect water and slowly release it into the Bede Burn.
>
> While there will inevitably be some disruption while we complete this work, we are working hard to keep it to a minimum. In particular the bulk of the work we need to do near to schools will be done during the school summer holidays.

'Delighted' construction is underway

Councillor Nancy Maxwell, Lead Member for Area Management and Community Safety, added:

> I'm delighted to see the construction phase of this project get underway. The work done earlier this year behind Toner Avenue School has created a wonderful open space, which the community will be able to enjoy once the main flood alleviation works have been completed. We would ask residents to bear with us during this short term disruption.
>
> Once complete, around 100 properties are going to reap the benefits of this scheme, with not only reduced flood risk but enhancements to the local environment too.

The scheme involves managing surface water where problems have been identified around the Monkton Burn, Lukes Lane Estate and Leam Lane area, Mill Lane, Lilac Walk/College Road, Devon Road, Campbell Park Road/ Thirlmere Court and Mountbatten Avenue areas.

The project will have wider social and environmental benefits, encouraging local people and children to get involved in creating valuable new habitat.

The project is largely funded by the Environment Agency, as well as a contribution from the local levy – which is money raised by local authorities for flood projects.

Motorists and pedestrians are advised there will be some diversions. The latest information on the scheme – including details of timescales and the required traffic management – can be found at the Monkton Flood Alleviation Scheme website

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Notice: Maidenhead Rowing Club Annual Regatta 2018: river restriction notice

River Thames restriction information for Saturday 11 August 2018.