



State of Oregon  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality

# Wastewater treatment best practices during 2021 drought

Much of Oregon is in a drought. As a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permittee, please be aware that there may be an insufficient volume of stream flow to adequately dilute your treated wastewater, which may make it difficult to prevent violations of in-stream water quality standards. The current low stream flows may extend into fall and early winter.

DEQ suggests that you consider taking the following actions to maintain compliance with in-stream water quality standards.

## Continue dry weather operations

- Operate your treatment plant to meet dry weather effluent limitations until rainfall has set in and stream flows increase.
- If you have an approved recycled water reuse plan, land apply wastewater into the fall until rainfall has set in and stream flows increase.
- If you operate a lagoon treatment system, retain as much wastewater as you can until stream flows increase. Be sure that your lagoons will structurally support higher storage levels and will have sufficient storage capacity for the wet season.

## Review and improve chlorination and dechlorination

Chlorine is extremely toxic to fish and other aquatic life. However, when properly used, it disinfects wastewater and prevents swimmers from becoming ill from human pathogens (bacteria and viruses).

- Ensure that your chlorination equipment is maintained and operating properly.
- Install a temporary dechlorination system if you do not currently have one. A simple dechlorination system (drum of dechlorination chemical with metering pump) can be installed relatively inexpensively. Please contact your local DEQ wastewater engineer for assistance.

## Increase maintenance

- Review all outstanding maintenance needs to ensure that wastewater control facilities are operated and maintained as efficiently as possible to provide the highest possible effluent quality.
- Pay extra attention to any problematic equipment to avoid overflows, bypassing and other problems due to breakdown of equipment.

## Other precautions

Please consider any other precautionary steps you might take to lower the risk of violating in-stream water quality standards during the drought. Depending on your system, such steps might include reducing the pollutant load, increasing wastewater storage, or increasing use of recycled water.

## What happens if instream violations occur?

Should documented violations of in-stream water quality standards occur as a result of your wastewater discharge, DEQ may consider your voluntary actions to protect the receiving waters when assessing what type of follow-up enforcement actions to take. Moreover, DEQ will continue to work with you to ensure that water quality is protected in Oregon's streams and rivers.

## For more information

Please contact your local DEQ office:

Coos Bay: 541-269-2721  
Eugene: 541- 686-7838  
Salem: 503-378-8240  
Medford: 541-776-6010  
Pendleton: 541-276-4063  
Portland: 503-229-5219

## Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email [deqinfo@deq.state.or.us](mailto:deqinfo@deq.state.or.us).

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