

STATE OF COLORADO

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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

LOW RISK DISCHARGE GUIDANCE:

DISCHARGES FROM SNOW MELTING MACHINES

JUNE 2008

This discharge guidance has been developed in accordance with Water Quality Policy-27, Low Risk Discharges. The Division has not developed a general permit for this category of discharges, and is instead managing the discharge through the development of guidance. When the provisions of this guidance are met, the Division will not actively pursue permitting or enforcement for the discharge of snow melt water, unless on a case-by-case basis the Division finds that a discharge has caused an adverse impact to the quality of any state waters receiving the discharge.

Snow melting activities are a type of industrial activity that are typically associated with short term discharges that are not expected to contain pollutants in concentrations that are toxic or in concentrations that would cause or contribute to a violation of a water quality standard. Snow melting activities include the use of fixed and transportable commercial equipment to melt snow, through the application of heat. Chemicals and other pollutants are not added in this process, and the discharged water typically reflects the quality of the snow with a slightly higher temperature (1° – 9° C). A large number of these types of discharges occur state-wide every winter, which require a resource intensive effort to permit, without resulting in a clear general benefit to environmental quality.

The following items must be followed by anyone discharging snow melt water:

- Snow may not be pushed, piled, or otherwise moved, directly into a river, lake or other surface water.
- The addition of cleaning materials or chemicals (such as deicers) during snow melting activities is strictly prohibited.
- All discharges must comply with the lawful requirements of federal agencies, municipalities, counties, drainage districts, and other local agencies regarding any discharges to storm drain systems, conveyances, or other water courses under their jurisdiction. In addition, if the discharge is to a storm sewer, prior to discharge the owner/operator must notify the owner of the conveyance system of the date, approximate time, location, and duration of the discharge(s). The guidance included in this document in no way reduces the existing authority of the owner of a storm sewer, or other local agency, from prohibiting or placing additional conditions on the discharge.
- The discharge shall not result in flooding of neighboring property, streets, gutters or storm sewers.
- The discharge must be diverted from building foundations or other areas that may be damaged from ground settling or swelling.
- The discharge must be visibly clear and not contain floating or solid materials.
- A visible sheen must not be evident in the discharge.

BMPs should be implemented as necessary to meet the conditions above, by anyone discharging wastewater resulting from snow melting activities. These BMPs have been developed by the Division to help ensure that the discharge will not negatively affect water quality.

BMPs for Discharge to Groundwater (discharge is to the ground through the soil or a rock pit, where the discharge will not flow overland directly into a surface water, storm sewer or similar conveyance).

- If any of the snow being melted is from a parking lot, street, or other paved area with vehicle traffic, an absorbent oil pad, boom or similar device should be used to eliminate oil from the discharge water.

BMPs for Discharge to Storm Sewers or Surface Waters (pollutants can impact or damage the health of the receiving waters, aquatic life, humans and animals. Storm sewers are connected to lakes, rivers, creeks and other waters).

- The temperature of the discharge water should be below 9° C (48° F).
- A filter bag or similar filtration device should be used to remove suspended solids. This device should be used and maintained in accordance with the manufacturers specifications. Settling ponds may be used if there is sufficient residence time to settle out all suspended solids.
- If any of the snow being melted is from a parking lot, street, or other paved area with vehicle traffic, or if a visible sheen is noticed, an absorbent oil pad, boom or similar device should be used to eliminate any oil from the discharge water.
- The discharge and associated runoff should be routed so that it does not cause any erosion.

Contact Information:

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