



National  
Operational  
Guidance

# Control measure

## Recycling



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

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### Control measure knowledge

Pumps can be used to recycle fire water at an incident. It is important that the act of recycling water does not make the situation worse. Consistent recycling of fire water run-off will increase the concentration of pollution, and the risk of spreading pathogens within recycled water spray. Incident commanders should make sure that the recirculated fire water is not harmful to either to personnel attending the incident or the local population.

Recycling water from mixed waste (household waste containing organic material, often nappies and food) should be avoided. For all other recycling sites (wood, plastic etc.) recycling the fire water run-off along with other tactics i.e. controlled burn presents a viable option to reducing damage to the environment.

Disposal of used recycled fire water may also present a problem for the fire service towards the end of an incident. Advice on continued use of recycled fire water run-off and its use and disposal of should be obtained from the:

- Relevant environment agency
- Public health body
- Tactical adviser
- Hazardous materials adviser

For further information see Section 3.2.8 [Environmental Protection Handbook](#).

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Have procedures for recycling fire water run-off
- Where appropriate, have procedures for testing pollutants in recycled fire water run-off. This maybe undertaken by:
  - Relevant environment agencies (biological and chemical sampling)
  - Sewage undertakers



- Public health bodies
- Alternative supplier/laboratories
- Tactical advisers
- Hazardous materials advisers/technical support teams

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Identify and assess the impact of the material on fire before the decision to recycle fire water run-off is made
- Consider the possibility of responders and the local population inhaling pollutants within recycled water vapour, based on their location and distance from the fire
- Carry out an environmental risk assessment and monitor the impact of tactics on the identified risk
- Consider the possible recirculation of fire water run-off, to reduce water used
- Consider the use of smooth bore branches to avoid blockages
- Recognise the potential contamination of equipment and PPE. See [National Operational Guidance: Operations](#)
- Consider hygiene. See [National Operational Guidance: Operations](#)
- Use false bottom dams or pools (made of plastic trays), containment tanks or lagoons to reduce the possibility of blockages from particles contained within water run-off
- Reduce the level of pollutants and debris in the firewater by replacing a proportion of the fire water each time it is recycled with fresh water
- Identify future disposal options. See [Disposal](#)