



National
Operational
Guidance

Control measure

Disposal



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

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Control measure knowledge

During the early stages of an incident when the fire service activities are more dynamic, it may not always be possible to contain fire water safely. In these circumstances use of the foul sewer should be considered for disposal. The flow rate should be controlled to avoid the foul sewer overflowing. Failure to control the flow could result in polluting water entering the water environment. See [Fire water run-off](#).

At some incidents, the foul sewage system may be the best disposal option. If this is the case, the sewerage company must be contacted. They will consider the request and take account of the likely impact if they do not approve the discharge. Agreement from the appropriate environment agency must be obtained before any release takes place. This can be obtained by telephone but must be applied for and confirmed in writing later. See Section 1.6.6, [Environmental Protection Handbook](#).

For further information see Section 3.10.3 [Environmental Protection Handbook](#): The movement of hazardous waste by the fire and rescue service in emergencies.

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

Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Be aware of their legal responsibilities and possible defences for the disposal of fire water under the [Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010](#) and [Environmental Damage \(Prevention and Remediation\) Regulations 2015 \(EDR 2015\)](#)
- Develop plans for the disposal of contaminated fire water run off which include plans for:
 - Use off-site storage within drainage infrastructure e.g. balancing ponds
 - Use of foul water drainage
 - Contingencies for where the responsibility for disposal cannot be identified

Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Ensure that waste products created by the fire and rescue service are disposed of both legally and responsibly. The [Environmental Permitting \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2010 \(EPR 2010\)](#) provides two exceptions for the emergency disposal of contaminated fire water runoff where the primary focus of fire and rescue service actions is saving life:
 - Emergency discharge and subsequent contamination of the water environment
 - The removal of waste by a fire and rescue services using fire and rescue service equipment or vehicles
- Consider the legal exceptions. see [Environmental Legislation](#)
- Ensure that the relevant environment agency is informed of the incident as soon as possible and is be involved in the decision to discharge
- Inform sewerage undertakers if discharge is to foul the water sewerage system
- Identify if the responsibility for disposal of waste produced at an incident can be delegated to a third party based on location, material and quantities involved. Namely:
 - Local authority - Playing fields, public open spaces, beaches and some roads
 - Landowner or owner / occupier - Private property
 - Highways agency - (Road Service in Northern Ireland) - Major roads
- Identify if there are any alternative methods of disposal:
 - Suitable site arrangements for a waste disposal
 - Tankering away the contaminated water
- Identify potential drainage routes for fire water run-off and released vehicle content
- Ensure that waste products created by the fire and rescue service are disposed of legally and responsibly