

## WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENT WITH BMPs?

➤ Your business has an Industrial Waste (IW) operating permit issued by the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER) Environmental Resources Management Division and your facility is not connected to sanitary sewers and discharges domestic wastewater to an on-site septic tank.

### AND/OR

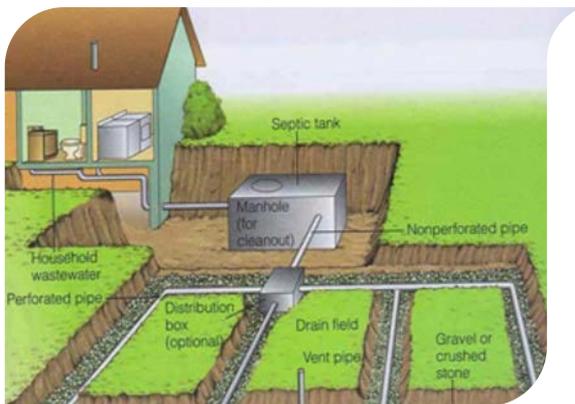
➤ After testing your facility's septic tank wastewater, we determined that industrial wastes (non-domestic wastes which may include but not be limited to solvents, fuels, etc.) had been discharged into your septic tank. Such discharges are a violation of Chapter 24 of the Code of Miami-Dade County requiring corrective action.

Because there is an industrial/commercial operation at this property discharging to a septic tank, special measures are necessary. These BMPs outline specific precautions that may help in preventing industrial waste discharges.

## WHAT IS A SEPTIC TANK?

The septic tank is a watertight container located underground which is made of concrete, fiberglass or steel. The tank receives domestic wastewater through an inlet pipe near the top of one side. Larger material in the wastewater settles to the bottom and bacteria in the tank break down the wastewater. The resulting partially-treated wastewater leaves through an exit pipe found on the opposite side of the tank and enters a distribution box. The wastewater is then funneled through a series of perforated parallel pipes; this series of pipes is called the drainfield. Partially-treated wastewater seeps out of the drainfield, receives further treatment through biological action and filtering in the soil, and eventually this treated water reaches the groundwater.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS IF INDUSTRIAL WASTES DO ENTER MY SEPTIC TANK?



Discharging industrial wastes to the septic tank may lead to groundwater and soil contamination. Septic tanks are not designed to treat industrial wastes, and since these wastes remain untreated they may leave the drainfield and seep into the groundwater causing contamination on and/or near the property. Cleanup of contaminated groundwater and soil can be very costly to you and/or the property owner. Since all of Miami-Dade County receives its drinking water from the groundwater, protection of groundwater resources is a high priority of the RER Department.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT POSSIBLE GROUNDWATER OR SOIL CONTAMINATION?

Prevent ANY industrial wastes from entering the drainage pipes (typically connected to the bathroom, kitchen, etc.) handling your domestic sewage. In addition, follow the BMPs ("good housekeeping" practices) listed below.

## IMPORTANT NOTE

***Following these BMPs does not guarantee that discharges to the septic tank will not lead to contamination and/or follow-up enforcement action by the RER Department. However, they will reduce the chances of this happening. If RER Department staff tests your septic tank wastewater and finds industrial wastes at levels of concern, the Department may still proceed with enforcement.***

For additional information or concerns please call the RER's Pollution Regulation and Division at (305) 372-6600 and ask to speak to an Area Supervisor in the "Local Programs" or discuss these BMPs with the RER Inspector that regularly inspects your facility. Thank you for doing your part in protecting the environment.

## BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- > **Consider pumping out your tank more frequently** - Running an industrial/commercial operation increases the chance that industrial wastes may enter your septic tank (often unintentionally). Consider having the tank regularly pumped out by a Miami-Dade licensed hauler and immediately pump the tank if you know that a discharge of industrial waste occurred.
- > **Perform general maintenance** - Though little maintenance is needed with a properly designed and operating septic tank, have your licensed hauler or plumber perform basic visual checks of the tank every few years. These should include checking for leaks (structural failures), missing baffles or tees necessary to contain oils and solids, or a very high water level in the tank.
- > **Identify all connections to the septic tank** - Take time to understand the plumbing layout of the property/facility and know all pipes that lead to the septic tank so you can carefully control what enters those pipes; only domestic wastewater is allowed to be discharged into the septic tank. Areas of significant risk are drains in shop floors or areas where industrial wastes may spill. Consult a licensed plumber for options to possibly plug drains.
- > **Avoid washing hands that are heavily soiled with industrial chemicals or products** - Always use dry/waterless methods (e.g., rags, paper towels) to remove the majority of industrial wastes before washing hands in any sink on the premises. Small amounts of wastes (e.g., petroleum products, solvents) washed down the drain regularly may increase risks of contamination. Remember, that unless profiled (wastes tested at an approved lab), rags and paper towels that come into contact with hazardous waste cannot be disposed of in the trash. Consider using plastic gloves instead.
- > **Where possible, keep track of all fresh solvents and other chemical substances** - Store these substances in a cabinet or in secondary containment away from bathrooms, sinks, and drain pipes to minimize the chance that someone will use these substances near these locations or accidentally spill them. It is a good practice to read the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) that come with most products to become familiar with the ingredients and possible environmental and health risks. Additional information on products can be found on the Internet or requested from the supplier.
- > **Educate employees** - Post signs throughout the facility, specifically in the work areas and bathrooms, to remind employees that drains are connected to a septic tank and to always follow these Best Management Practices. Periodically take the time to verbally educate all employees about the risks of industrial wastes, and consider developing a short contamination prevention program that employees can sign off on once they have been educated.
- > **Avoid using cleaning products considered "strong/harsh" when cleaning bathrooms/kitchens/floors** - Be aware of the cleaning products used since some contain substances that may show up in analytical tests of the wastewater in your septic tank at levels that may result in RER enforcement action; this finding would likely result in assessment/cleanup of the septic tank. Considerations should be given to using "environmentally friendly" or "Green" cleaning products that use more natural substances (e.g., citrus based substances). Read the label and use the product according to the specified instructions. Some product labels state that they are not septic tank safe, and may even cause the septic tank system to fail by killing the bacteria in your tank.
- > **Dispose of mop water properly** - Use great care in disposing of mop water in the drain pipes leading to a septic tank. Mop water from work areas where solvents are used or spills occur is considered industrial wastewater, and therefore, should never be disposed of in sinks or toilets which discharge to the septic tank. The RER Department recommends you make arrangements for containerizing and hauling such mop water for proper disposal. Use solid absorbent material to quickly cleanup spills and properly dispose of it. For oil spills, absorbent pads are available that allow the oil to be squeezed out into a waste oil drum. The pads can be reused several times and disposed of with a licensed hauler.

