

# Fact Sheet: The Oil/Sand Interceptor

## Introduction

For businesses that generate oily wastewater, an Oil/Sand Interceptor can be effective and economical means to treat wastewater to an acceptable level for discharge to the Pocatello sanitary sewer system. Because oil and water do not mix well, and as oil “floats” due to being lighter than water, effective treatment can be achieved if the correct Oil/Sand Interceptor is installed, routine maintenance is adhered to, and the separation of oil and water is not prevented by the excessive use of certain chemicals.

## What is an Oil/Sand Interceptor?

Standard Oil/Sand Interceptors are large-capacity, underground cement vaults installed between a drain and the connecting pipe to Pocatello’s sanitary sewer system. These vaults are designed with baffles to trap sediments and retain floating oils. The large capacity of a vault slows down the wastewater allowing oil to float to the surface and solid material to settle out.

## Who needs an Oil/Sand Interceptor?

Any business that has the potential to generate oily or sediment laden wastewater must install, use, and maintain an Oil/Sand Interceptor. Businesses that typically need Oil/Sand Interceptors include, but are not limited to:

- Quick-lube stations
- Transportation fueling facilities
- All Vehicle and equipment repair
- All Vehicle washing and detailing, including steam and pressure washing

## What are the installation guidelines?

Before installing an Oil/Sand Interceptor, all plans shall be submitted to the City of Pocatello for review. Businesses will need a wastewater discharge permit allowing discharge of wastewater from the properly installed Oil/Sand Interceptor. When submitting plans include the following information:

- Name, address, and phone number of the facility, and the name, address, and phone number of the person legally responsible for the operation of the facility.
- Drawings of the Oil/Sand Interceptor with capacities and dimensions. The outlet to the sewer must have a sampling “T” installed.
- Site map detailing all drains and the Oil/Sand

Interceptor location.

- Location of the water sources and maximum water flows, in gallons per minute (gpm) from all potential service areas and equipment discharging to the Oil/Sand Interceptor.

## How do businesses inspect the Oil/Sand Interceptor to know when it is dirty?

Many think that if it is still draining, it’s working; but like any “filter” an Oil/Sand Interceptor needs occasional cleaning. An Oil/Sand Interceptor’s efficiency is most affected by settled solids or sludge and oils.

WPC recommends that businesses regularly inspect an Oil/Sand Interceptor. Steps to inspect are:

- Open the interceptor and look in each chamber. Make sure the chambers have the required turn downs “T”. The turn downs should extend six-inches below the water surface.
- Clean the entire Oil/Sand Interceptor when there is sludge buildup on the bottom of the outlet chamber (the compartment that discharges to the sanitary sewer) or when there is oil in outlet chamber.

Keeping logs of inspecting, maintenance and cleaning of all Oil/Sand Interceptors and waste disposals are required to discharge to the sanitary sewer and are important for waste management. Knowing when you last cleaned your Oil/Sand Interceptor and when it is due again can help keep your Oil/Sand Interceptor operating at maximum efficiency. Logs are necessary to track waste for future reference. Keeping a log demonstrates your business operates in good faith and may prevent escalating enforcement in the event an accidental spill or other sewer violation should occur.

## Who do businesses call to clean out an Oil/Sand Interceptor?

There are firms that specialize in pumping out and cleaning Oil/Sand Interceptors. The phone book “yellow pages,” for instance, lists these companies under “Septic Tanks & Systems – Cleaning.” These firms have special vacuum trucks that pump out materials with the consistency of anything from liquid slurry to solid dirt. The materials are required to be disposed of at a licensed waste disposal facility and are not permitted to discharge to Pocatello’s

sanitary sewer.

Since vendors may have different requirements and/or treatment methods, costs could vary.

Fees can include:

- Lab analysis from a sample of the Oil/Sand Interceptor's contents
- Wastewater disposal charges
- Surcharges for excessive oil and sludge

Make sure the vendor vacuums out all of the sludge in each chamber. Businesses should inspect and then fill up the Oil/Sand Interceptor with clean water before they begin discharging to the sanitary sewer.

### **Pollutant Sources**

Pollutants can enter the Oil/Sand Interceptor as a result of many common activities performed in relation to vehicle services. Some of the activities performed that may introduce pollutants are:

- Washing floors, vehicles, and work areas.
- Improper storage of fluids and chemicals.
- Removing parts that contain fluids or chemicals.
- Cleaning parts.

### **What is not allowed to discharge into an Oil/Sand Interceptor?**

- Antifreeze, degreaser and detergents
- Fuels, alcohols or solvents
- Concentrated amounts of oily products
- Brake, transmission, power steering fluids, paints, and heavy metals

Oil/Sand Interceptors are not designed to treat heavy metal-bearing wastewater. Some potential examples of heavy metal-bearing wastewater:

- Hot tank cabinet washer solutions from auto repair or machine shops
- Any metal finishing, plating or metal recovery water
- Used oils, used antifreeze, used brake, transmission and used power steering fluids.

### **Spill Control and Prevention**

To prevent the introduction of pollutants to the sanitary sewer system, secondary containment is required for all liquid materials in volumes greater than one gallon that are stored in any part of a building with one or more floor drains or an Oil/Sand Interceptors. The secondary containment unit shall be able to contain 110% of the volume of the largest container in the containment area.

Containment can be a sealed bermed wall, individual containers, or the removal of the material to a room that does not have any floor drains or an Oil/Sand Interceptor. The goal is to prevent these materials from entering floor drains, sinks, Oil/Sand Interceptors, or any fixture connected to the sewer system.

A spill containment kit should be assembled and stored in an assessable place in case of an uncontained spill. Any spills should be wiped up or absorbed and placed in spill container until it can be properly disposed of. Careful control and prevention of spills can reduce the discharge of pollutants to the sewer, increase the efficiency, and reduce the cost of maintaining an Oil/Sand Interceptor.

### **Pollution Prevention Plans**

The cost of extra protection, when implementing a pollutant prevention program can be justified. A pollutant prevention program can help eliminate the constant problems and inconvenience of plugged, frothing sewer lines and potential health and safety risks. Potential costs of property damage or business shutdowns due to sewer backups or explosions can be extremely expensive. Any business responsible for property damage or damage to the sanitary sewer can be held liable for all cost.

**For further information Call Water Pollution Control at 208-234-6256 or [www.pocatello.us/wpc/wpc\\_pretreatment.htm](http://www.pocatello.us/wpc/wpc_pretreatment.htm)**