



Environmental Management Services

Pollution Incidents From Unmaintained Interceptors - Case Studies

Summary

Interceptors are a key defence to preventing oil pollution but unless they are adequately maintained they may not be fully functional. British standard BS EN 858-2:2003 provides advice on suitable maintenance regimes for interceptors, if these are not followed companies are at an increased risk of causing oil pollution.

The following case studies are summarised from successful Environment agency prosecutions and give examples of where failing to maintain interceptors has caused major pollution incidents.



“an environmental incident waiting to happen.”

A fuel company in Gateshead were fined £28,000 after an unmaintained interceptor released oil polluting a 4km stretch of the river Tyne.

The spill occurred after the interceptor became blocked but because it was not monitored the blockage was not detected.

A company director admitted that by not maintaining the oil interceptor, it was an environmental incident waiting to happen. They had failed in their responsibility to ensure the interceptor was checked, and should have been aware of the possible consequences.

“so full of oil that it could not function properly.”

A haulage company in Surrey were ordered to pay £6,867 after an oil spill at its vehicle maintenance yard caused "significant damage to local wildlife".

Members of the public informed EA officers that a large amount of oil could be seen on the Thames, this was traced upstream to a vehicle maintenance facility.

Peter Ehmann, EA officer, found that an oil interceptor at the yard, designed to stop small spillages from leaving the premises, was so full of oil that it could not function properly. This had caused thick black waste engine oil to run into the surface-water drainage system.

The company admitted in court that it had failed to empty the interceptor, which meant it had failed to operate properly.

"could have been avoided with a comprehensive maintenance plan"

A UK water company was fined £4,000 and ordered to pay £4,323.08 costs to the Environment Agency following a spill from their interceptor. The company's interceptor had failed to capture a 4,500 litre diesel spill which was allowed to discharge into an adjacent ditch killing around 50 fish.

The pump within that interceptor did not work because the sensors that activated it were faulty. Neil Martin, the agency's investigating officer, said of the incident:

If the interceptor had a robust maintenance plan in place it is likely that the faulty sensors would have been detected and the incident could have been prevented.