



UIC Regulation May Affect Many School Districts

By Eric Collins, RG

In recent months, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has waged an aggressive campaign to get owners and operators of underground injection controls (UIC) to comply with federal and state UIC regulations. This article is intended to provide school districts with general information about UICs, how the DEQ's UIC Program may affect them, and resources available for help.

What are UICs?

UICs are structures that dispose of storm water and/or other liquids directly below ground. Public and private entities with facilities located in areas without access to sewer or storm water conveyance systems often use UICs, in the form of sumps, dry wells, trench drains, floor drains, septic tanks and drainfields, for the disposal of process waste and storm water. The most common UIC systems in Oregon are dry wells used to drain storm water runoff that collects in streets, parking lots, and roof downspouts.

Why are they regulated?

Many communities in Oregon rely on groundwater as a water supply source. Efforts to protect groundwater have been demonstrated to be cost effective. Alternatively, it is extremely expensive to treat contaminated groundwater to drinking water standards or to find alternative water supply sources. UICs carry a high potential risk because pollutants have a more direct pathway to groundwater compared to seepage through naturally filtrating shallow soils.

In most cases, discharges into storm water dry wells do not negatively affect groundwater quality. In fact, the discharges

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President's Message

Phil Wentz

GOSH, or as luncheon host Dave (of the KEX Mark & Dave show) said, "Since it's Oregon, shouldn't it be OGOSH!" What a year to kick off the school track at the Governor's Occupational Safety and Health Conference. With budgets slashed and many districts eliminating travel and conferences, the OSSOA Board thought we'd be alone in our classroom.

We were pleased that our workshops were well attended. The Power Point shows will be available on the website, www.ossoa.org in the near future. There's one on playgrounds, one of general school inspections and the last was used as a conversation starter for a round table discussion.

OSSOA will be back at GOSH in two years. With hopes for a better economy, we hope to see you there.

Because of the economy, the OSSOA Board is working on a one day conference this July at Eagle Crest. The day would be truncated to allow folks to drive to and from the workshop in one day. Details will be forthcoming.

The most important message I have to deliver is that safety saves money. Often cut early on without consideration for alternatives, keeping all people – kids, staff, volunteers and visitors – safe has many

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are beneficial to local aquifers and add water quantity to groundwater resources. The challenge is to prevent discharges of pollutants into dry wells and other UICs by identifying and managing the environmental risk. As an example, storm water dry wells located in high vehicle traffic areas and near loading docks are considered to be a relatively high risk to the environment. Whereas, UICs that dispose of roof drainage are considered to be a low risk.

What is the status of UIC regulations?

In the 1970s, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) initiated the Safe Drinking Water Act, which includes rules regulating UICs. The EPA authorized the DEQ to oversee UICs in Oregon in the 1980s. In 2007, Oregon legislators passed a bill authorizing the DEQ to add staff to its UIC Program and charge fees for UIC registration. Before this legislation, the DEQ had inadequate funding and staffing to carry out a functional UIC program in accordance with federal rules including public outreach, timely review of registrations, guidance development, permit issuance, and compliance enforcement actions.

In September 2008, DEQ sent a form letter to hundreds of registered UIC owners that may not be in compliance and warned of enforcement actions and potential penalties for noncompliance. An amnesty deadline of Dec. 31, 2008, was given to owners to start the process of registering UICs and taking actions toward compliance. Although the deadline has passed, the DEQ has indicated that because of the current economic downturn, it will work with owners who are taking steps toward UIC compliance.

How are UICs approved by the DEQ?

All UICs are required to be registered with the DEQ and approved either through rule authorization or a Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) permit. The DEQ currently charges a registration fee for each UIC ranging from \$100 to \$300 based on environmental risk and associated activity. Rule authorization is commonly used when owners have fewer than about 25 UICs. The DEQ's requirements for rule authorization are relatively prescriptive and conservatively protective of groundwater.

A WPCF permit, issued by the DEQ, is another option that allows more flexibility to demonstrate UIC compliance and typically is used by owners that have many UICs. This option includes UIC monitoring and reporting. The DEQ

permit fees are approximately \$11,500 up-front and \$2,000 annually thereafter. The terms in the permit are negotiable with the DEQ.

If a UIC does not meet DEQ requirements, owners often consider one of the following alternatives: (1) decommission the UIC and use an alternate method of disposal (e.g., vegetated storm water swales), (2) redirect UIC drainage to the local municipal sewer system, if available, or (3) modify the UIC to meet DEQ requirements (e.g., install filtration medium).

Where can school districts go to get help?

The DEQ's UIC Web site is recommended for more information on UIC regulations and registration forms. (www.deq.state.or.us/wq/uic/uic.htm)

Also, DEQ's staff is available to help answer regulatory questions. UIC owners typically choose to use their own staff and resources to gather inventory information. A professional geologist or engineer who specializes in UICs can be hired to assist owners through the regulatory process and, if necessary, evaluate compliance alternatives based on cost, effectiveness, ease of implementation, and maintenance.

Eric Collins is a registered geologist in the Portland office of GSI Water Solutions, Inc., a water resources consulting firm. He has more than 20 years of experience conducting groundwater, storm water, and geologic investigations for public and private clients, and has assisted a wide range of clients attain UIC compliance. Eric can be reached by e-mail at ecollins@gsims.com.

Plan to attend
July 29, 2009

OSSOA's
Annual Workshop
Eagle Crest Resort—
Redmond

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different positive results.

First, everyone goes home, as the saying goes, in one piece; no staff time has to re-directed to first aid or other caretaking roles; a full complement of staff returns the next day for work; you reduce the risk of liability actions against your district; insurance premiums can be maintained at inflationary increases and not inflation plus poor experience; and, people are happier – who wants to get hurt?

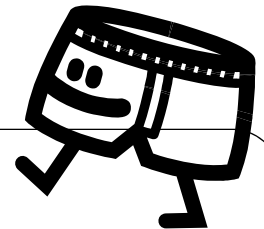
So I leave you with the mantra that “safety saves” to consider and maybe even chant (privately I’d suggest). Remember OSSOA is here to help and the listserv is just a few taps away. There are ways to keep safety in the forefront and save money.



Check out our web site for important safety information and links.

- Safety topics
- Links to on-line resources
- Conference registration
- Past Newsletter issues

www.ossoa.org



Calendar of Events

2009

April 15-17, 2009	OSFMA Conference <i>Go to www.osfma.org for more conference information.</i>	Albany
May 7, 2009	Healthy Buildings, Active Learners: Improving Indoor Environments for Oregon Schools <i>Go to www.mrsnv.com/evt/home.jsp?id=2455 for more information.</i>	Village Green, Cottage Grove
July 29, 2009	OSSOA Annual Workshop <i>More information to come. Check out our web site for registration and agenda information closer to the conference.</i>	Eagle Crest, Redmond

This calendar of events is also available on-line. Check the web site for the most updated information.

BOARD BRIEFS

By Becky Nino

The board has been meeting monthly throughout the school year. We are continuing to work on outreach to educational entities.

Board members represented the association at the 2009 GOSH Conference by presenting four workshops. Workshop topics included: Playground Safety, OSSOA Roundtable, Basic Safety Inspections and Safety & Security Issues Roundtable.

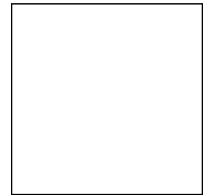
We’re busy planning for the summer workshop. If you have requests or suggestions for workshop topics, please contact a board member. Additional details about the workshop will be communicated over the next months.

Anyone interested in running for the board please let us know. Elections will take place at the summer workshop.

Remember to use the listserv for questions, comments or concerns regarding safety and risk management. Members can send a message directly to ossoa@list.osba.org.



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Any questions regarding this publication or OSSOA may be answered by calling the OSBA office at (503)588-2800 or by sending an e-mail to jhummert@osba.org.



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