

Background - Water Filtration Plant

The Water Filtration Plant (WFP) is located at 26 Waterworks Lane, Gormans Hill, Bathurst. The WFP treats source water and supplies filtered water to the community of Bathurst. Water is treated to approved standards identified in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. WFP operations are conducted in accordance with policies and procedures to ensure compliance with its Environment Protection Licence and other regulatory requirements.

Context – Pollution Incident Response Management Plan

A provision under the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment Act (POELA) 2011 is the requirement to prepare, keep, test, and implement a Pollution Incident Response Management Plan (PIRMP) for each environmental protection licence.

The objectives of the Plan are to:

- Communicate in a timely manner and with sufficient detail about a pollution incident to relevant authorities and people outside the facilities who may be affected by the impacts of the pollution incident;
- Minimise and control the risk of any pollution incident occurring at the facilities by requiring identification of risks and the development of planned actions to minimise and manage those risks; and,
- Ensure that the plan is properly implemented by trained staff, identifying persons responsible for implementing it, and ensuring that the plan is regularly tested for accuracy, currency and suitability.

The PIRMP is a comprehensive document that is designed to address all aspects of managing a pollution incident. It does not exist in isolation, but rather sits within a suite of Council-owned strategic documents, plans, and procedures that relate to service delivery, asset management, workplace health and safety, environmental management, economic sustainability, and public health.

Pollution Incidents

The NSW EPA defines a "pollution incident" as:

"an incident or set of circumstances during or as a consequence of which there is or is likely to be a leak, spill or other escape or deposit of a substance, as a result of which pollution has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur. It includes an incident or set of circumstances in which a substance has been placed or disposed of on premises, but it does not include an incident or set of circumstances involving only the emission of any noise."

A pollution incident is required to be notified if there is a risk of 'material harm to the environment', which is defined in Section 147 of the POEO Act as:

“(a) harm to the environment is material if:

- (i) it involves actual or potential harm to the health or safety of human beings or to ecosystems that is not trivial, or
- (ii) it results in actual or potential loss or property damage of an amount, or amounts in aggregate, exceeding \$10,000 (or such other amount as is prescribed by the regulations), and

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(b) loss includes the reasonable costs and expenses that would be incurred in taking all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent, mitigate or make good harm to the environment.”

Notification of Relevant Authorities

Bathurst Regional Council maintains *Pollution Incident Response Management Plan Flowchart* for the WFP to guide actions and decisions in the event of a pollution incident. This flowchart outlines the steps that must be followed in the event of ANY pollution incident and includes both internal and external notification requirements. The flowchart identifies the order of actions to be undertaken and assigns these responsibilities to specific team members.

Where the pollution incident causes or threatens material harm to the environment, the following authorities will be contacted immediately by the Engineer:

Regulatory Authorities and PIRMP Contacts	
Authority	Contact Details
Emergency Services (Contacts Police, Fire & Rescue NSW, Ambulance, Hazmat, State Emergency Service (SES))	000
Environment Protection Authority (EPA)	131 555 (24 hour emergency hotline MUST be used when PIRMP is activated)
NSW Health (Public Health Unit)	6330 5880 0428 400 626
SafeWork NSW	13 10 50

Procedures for Communicating with the Community

Bathurst Regional Council is committed to operating the WFP in a responsible and safe manner. Effective internal and external stakeholder engagement is necessary to fulfil this commitment.

Council’s Communications Team has in place a suite of communication mechanisms to notify, update, and provide advice in a timely manner regarding any potential pollution incident. These may include (as appropriate), the following activities:

- Telephone calls;
- SMS messages;
- Door knocks;
- Letter drops;
- Website updates;

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- Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter);
- Signage; and,
- Local print, radio and TV media.

The PIRMP flowchart includes early notification of Council's senior team (including the Communications Manager). This ensures that appropriate community communications activities and can be undertaken in a timely manner.

Procedures for Contacting the Owners or Occupiers of Premises in the Vicinity

The PIRMP includes the location and details of owners or occupiers of premises in the vicinity of the WFP. These details are updated as required and reviewed on an annual basis.

In addition to the community communication strategies identified above, neighbours may be directly contacted via a number of mechanisms, including:

- Telephone calls;
- SMS messages;
- Emails;
- Door knocks; and,
- Letter drops.

Early Warning Mechanisms

Regular site inspections are undertaken to support the identification of any potential issues. At all times, Council adopts a precautionary approach and staff report any potential risks such as leaks and maintenance issues for investigation and action.

SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) is a centralised computer system which monitors and controls the WFP's treatment and distribution systems. The SCADA system incorporates a range of warnings and alarms. These alarms are received both on-site and remotely. Some functions may be controlled remotely should operations staff be off-site.

Any pollution events or threats are immediately communicated to senior Council staff as per the PIRMP flowchart to assist with early decision-making and communications actions.

Contact

For further information, contact Council's Manager Water and Waste on 6333 6290 (business hours) or 6334 2795 (after hours).