

# Requirements for the Classification and Reuse of Drilling Mud Waste in the ACT

This Information Sheet provides advice to **producers, transporters and receivers** of **drilling mud waste** in the ACT.

The beneficial reuse of **drilling mud waste** is supported provided it is managed in accordance with guidance issued by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the requirements of the *Environment Protection Act 1997* (the Act) and *Environment Protection Regulation 2005* (the Regulation).

This Information Sheet provides guidance on meeting these legislative requirements, including the need to adopt the **general environmental duty** under the Act to minimise **environmental harm**.

## Background

The ACT EPA supports the beneficial reuse of **waste** materials in accordance with the **waste** hierarchy where this would not result in adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

**Drilling mud waste** is classified as **liquid waste** under the *ACT's Environmental Standards: Assessment & Classification of Liquid & Non-liquid Wastes June 2000* (the **Waste Classification Standards**) and should be managed in accordance with the guidance detailed in this Information Sheet, as opposed to being disposed to **landfill**. **Drilling mud waste** is a common **waste** material that, due to the low cost of treatment and its generally uncontaminated nature, can be readily reused.

This Information Sheet was developed to complement the **Waste Classification Standards**. It is intended to make it easier for industry to reuse uncontaminated **waste** material produced during bulk drilling and non-destructive hydro-excavation, while still meeting their **general environmental duty** and avoiding **environmental harm** as defined under the Act.

## What is Drilling Mud Waste?

**Drilling mud waste** means the liquid or sludge residue generated during directional drilling or non-destructive hydro-excavation of soil, which may comprise a mixture of:

- naturally occurring rock and soil including but not limited to sandstone, shale and clay
- naturally occurring organic matter including tree roots, grass and shrub, and
- drilling fluid, which primarily consists of water and may also contain non synthetic additives such as bentonite

## Limitations of this guidance

The **classification** method detailed in this Information Sheet does not apply to **drilling mud waste** that has been generated by drilling:

- for mineral, gas or coal exploration
- which potential disturbs hazardous materials, for example asbestos and/or asbestos utility infrastructure
- through **contaminated** soils or acid sulphate soils, or

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- that introduces contaminants during the generation process, including but not limited to lubrication oils and chemical additives.

**Note:** This guidance only applies to **drilling mud waste** generated and disposed of within the ACT.

## Persons to whom this guidance applies

For **drilling mud waste** this guidance applies to:

- any person who generates the **waste (producer)**
- any person who is transporting the **waste** from the premises on behalf of the **producer (transporter)**, and
- any person who receives the **waste** for temporary storage, dewatering or disposal for the purpose of this **classification (receiver)**.

## Producer requirements

Prior to commencing drilling or excavation activities, the **producer** must undertake a **preliminary site assessment** in accordance with EPA Information Sheet 7 to demonstrate that the **waste** from the activity will not be impacted by known or potentially **contaminated land** from current or past uses at the site. If the **preliminary site assessment** identifies **contaminated land** or potential **contaminated land**, the **waste** is to be managed as **contaminated** until assessed and demonstrated otherwise in accordance with the EPA Information Sheet 4.

**Preliminary site assessment** documents must be kept by the **producer** for a period of at least two years.

The producer must ensure that additives or contaminants (for example, oil lubricants) are not introduced during the drilling or excavation operation. If synthetic additives or contaminants are introduced the **waste** must be classified in accordance with the **Waste Classification Standards**.

A copy of the completed **preliminary site assessment** (and if applicable, soil test results) must be provided by the producer to the **transporter** and **receiver** and kept by all parties for a period of no less than two years.

## Waste transport requirements

The **waste** must be transported in a vehicle that meets the requirements for safe, secure and leak-free transport. Prior to transporting **waste**, the **transporter** must ensure that there is no **contaminated** residue or material in the tanker/tanker trailer. If **waste** is transported in a tanker/tanker trailer which does contain **contaminated** material or residue, then this **classification** does not apply.

The **transporter** and **receiver** must keep the following records for a period of at least two years:

- date and quantity of **waste** received
- name and address of the **producer**, and
- registration number of the **transporter's** vehicle used to transport the **waste**.

The **transporter** must develop and implement a Spill Management Plan. The EPA must be notified immediately of any incident or spill of **drilling mud waste** likely to cause **environmental harm**.

## Receiver requirements

**Waste** can be directed to a temporary or permanent **dewatering facility** and dewatered provided appropriate storage capacity and controls are in place to prevent releases to the environment. The **waste** may be dewatered either **in-situ** or **ex-situ** when:

- conditions outlined above have been met and it has been established with certainty that no contamination is present or likely to be present in the **waste** and the soil does not contain any hazardous **waste** or material (for example building **waste** that may contain asbestos).
- the method of disposal does not pose and is not likely to cause **environmental harm**. Such forms of **environmental harm** include, but are not limited to discharge of sediments to **land**, air or water.

When **drilling mud waste** does not meet the **classification** requirements outlined in this Information Sheet it must be directed to a facility with appropriate controls to contain the **waste** and be classified in accordance with the **Waste Classification Standards** and:

- following dewatering, the material must meet the definition of **non-liquid waste** under the **Waste Classification Standards**, and
- liquid generated from the treatment of the **drilling mud waste**, including **drilling fluid**, must be treated as **liquid waste** as defined under the **Waste Classification Standards**.

It is the responsibility of the **receiver** to ensure all appropriate approvals are in place for the treatment of **drilling mud waste**. If the **waste receiver** is unsure they should contact the EPA to discuss prior to accepting any **waste**.

The **receiver** must develop and implement a Spill Management Plan. The EPA must be notified immediately of any incident or spill of **drilling mud waste** likely to cause **environmental harm**.

A copy of the **waste's classification** must be carried in any vehicle transporting the **waste** to and from the relevant treatment or disposal facility.

The following conditions must be met by the **receiver** of **drilling mud waste** or residual soil or liquid from **drilling mud waste** following its dewatering:

- ensure **waste** is stored and treated appropriately to prevent emissions to air, **land** and water which may cause **environmental harm** as defined under the Act and Regulations
- not receive material taken from known or potentially **contaminated land**
- keep records of the quantity of the **waste** received, stored and disposed of, including the **producer's** and **receiver's** name(s) and address(s), for a period of two years, and
- apply any residual soil from the **drilling mud waste** to **land** within a reasonable period of time.

## For more information

Contact the EPA by calling Access Canberra on 13 22 81 or email [environment.protection@act.gov.au](mailto:environment.protection@act.gov.au).

Go to [www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au) to obtain copies of the **Standards and Information Sheets detailed and** for further information relating to assessing **contaminated land** and **waste classification** and management.

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Note: This guidance material has been prepared using the best information available to Access Canberra. Any information about legislative obligations or responsibilities included in this material is only applicable to the circumstances described in the material. You should always check the legislation referred to in this material and make your own judgement about what action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with the law. Accordingly, Access Canberra extends no warranties as to the suitability of the information for your specific situation.