



OH&S Bulletin

Keep It Clean – It's no Joke!

As John Cummins might have said, even Blind Freddie can see that we can't take our water supplies for granted. So it makes sense to use recycled water for industrial purposes, including the building and construction industry

Classes

There are four classes of recycled, or “reclaimed” water, with A being the cleanest and D the “dirtiest”.

In the building and construction industry the most common uses for recycled water are in road construction and dust suppression. Classes A to C may be used for these purposes, depending on price and availability. In road construction Class C is most commonly used.

These classes of recycled water are not intended for domestic use because they have come from sewage systems or water that has already been used by industry (egg washing vegetables), so they contain varying amounts of pathogens, or “germs”. So it is critical that we handle it safely. In short, this means that we must avoid direct contact with the water at all stages of its use and ensure that it does not run off or spray onto food crops or into areas that are accessible to the general public.

It is very important that procedures are developed for the use of recycled water where it is being used and that workers are trained in its safe use. Unless you are absolutely sure what Class of water you are using, it is safest to assume that it is Class C.

Recycled water must be transported in watertight vessels so that it is not spilled. The driver's cabin should be sealed.

When decanting the water from one vessel to another, only the person doing the job should be in the area and they should avoid contact with the water or spillage.

Good Hygiene is Essential

If you are using recycled water it is extremely important that you observe good personal hygiene. Always wash your hands before handling and eating food or drinks, blowing your nose, smoking, going to the toilet, taking a break and when you have finished using the water. When washing your hands, always soap and warm water and *dry them thoroughly* using a disposable towel or air dryer. Also make sure you clean your fingernails using a nailbrush. Jewellery harbours dirt and bacteria so remove it before starting work.

Avoid contact with broken skin. Cuts and sores should be kept clean and covered with a waterproof dressing, which should be changed frequently.

Wear protective glasses. If you do get water in your eyes wash them immediately with clean water.

Wear clean, washable protective clothing and waterproof safety boots. If wearing gloves keep them clean.

Avoid scratching or rubbing your face and body, especially your eyes. If you do this inadvertently immediately wash the affected area.



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Remember that recycled water equipment, containers and storage areas are likely to be contaminated so don't put personal items on or near them and don't sit or lean on them.

If you develop any symptoms of sickness like nausea, diarrhoea, high temperature or skin rashes, report to your First Aider and ensure OH&S personnel are informed.

Report any illness

If you are unwell, have any skin conditions or receiving treatment that could suppress your immune system it may not be appropriate for you to work with recycled water. You or your OH&S representative and/or officer should check with your doctor.