

A-46 Color Events

Color events are charity, religious, or commercial events that involve the use of powdered and/or liquid dyes. Because they typically occur outside, there is a high likelihood of the color material entering storm drain systems and surface water unless measures are taken to prevent these illicit discharges from occurring.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are required by King County Code 9.12. If the BMPs included here are not enough to prevent contamination of stormwater, you will be required to take additional measures.

Pre–event BMPs:

- Call King County Stormwater Services at (206) 477–4811 and ask to speak to a Water Quality Engineer for specific approval requirements and to arrange a pre–event site visit and/or consultation. Every event will have site specific stormwater considerations.
- Create a map of your event that includes the following: event route; nearby streams, lakes and ponds; start and finish areas; color application stations, and the storm drain inlets at the color application, start and finish areas.
- Create a Pollution Prevention Plan that details the measures taken to ensure that NO dye material, either during or after the event, will enter the storm drain system and how it will all be removed and disposed of. The plan must address what will happen in the event of rain.
- Contract with a commercial street cleaning firm to clean paved surfaces. Have a storm drain cleaning contractor on–call for discharges to storm drains or emergency clean–up if necessary.
- Request a copy of the dye product’s MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) from the manufacturer or supplier. Review MSDS for potential safety and environmental hazards.
- Provide copies of the map, pollution prevention plan, commercial cleaning contract, dye MSDSs, and the names and contact information of the event officials for both during and after the event to the local stormwater agency. This information shall be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the event.

Preventing Runoff From Entering Storm Drain Systems and Water Bodies:

- Protect storm drains by using berms and covering the drains with tarps or catch basin covers.
- Prohibit participants from throwing dye within 100 feet of any stream, ditch or water body.
- Set up color stations at least 100 feet away from any stream, ditch or water body.
- The route, start, finish, and color application stations must be at least 100’ away from any permeable pavement or the permeable pavement must be completely covered.

Event Clean-up BMPs:

- Dry off tarps and stained wet pavement with towels or absorbent pads.
- Use brooms or street sweepers to clean up paved areas.
- Do not use blowers to move dye material.
- Do not use hoses or pressure washers to rinse excess dye off of tarps, sidewalks or paved areas.
- If it becomes necessary to use water to clean surfaces, all the water must be collected and disposed of to the sanitary sewer system, with approval from the local sewer agency.
- Call King County Stormwater Services immediately (24/7) if any colored water enters a storm drain or water body.
- All litter and debris must be picked up and properly disposed of.

“Biodegradable” and “non-toxic” do NOT mean that a substance can go into storm drains or water bodies. The dye material can harm aquatic organisms by altering water quality and chemistry. State and Federal environmental laws require local jurisdictions to prohibit non-stormwater discharges to storm drains. Dye material and any wash water are prohibited discharges.

For more information or assistance contact the King County Stormwater Services at 206-477-4811 and visit kingcounty.gov/stormwater.