

WEBPAGE NARRATIVE

Below is narrative to include on a Source Control webpage that has ADA compatibility. Anything posted, including external links, PDFs, or other uploads needs to be able to be read by a screen reader easily and accurately.

Page description:

Whatcom County's Stormwater Source Control Program provides technical support and inspections to keep stormwater clean and protect local water quality. Find out what to expect during a Source Control inspection and get expert guidance on preventing stormwater pollution at its source.

SEO keywords:

- Stormwater
- Runoff
- Pollution
- Source Control
- Inspection
- Prevention
- Drainage

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Stormwater Source Control

Protecting water quality is a shared responsibility. Whether you operate a business, manage a facility, work on a construction site, or maintain commercial property, your daily activities can make a difference.

The Whatcom County Source Control Program works with local businesses, homeowners associations, apartment buildings, and farms to keep pollution out of our stormwater system and the surrounding environment. This helps protect our local streams, lakes, wetlands, groundwater, and marine water.

Have questions or need assistance? Reach out to the Whatcom County Source Control Program for education, technical assistance, pollution prevention, and other support to

help protect the valuable water resources that make our County unique. Contact EnvironmentalHealth@co.whatcom.wa.us or call 360-778-6000.

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Notes below this line:

First draft content:

Frequently Asked Questions & Resources

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What is the Source Control Program?

The Source Control Program is required under the [Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit issued by the Washington State Department of Ecology](#) and held by Whatcom County. As a permittee, Whatcom County is required to implement a Source Control Program to identify pollutant-generating businesses and their activities, provide education and technical assistance to them and the general public, conduct announced and unannounced inspections, and work with businesses and property owners to prevent stormwater pollution. While the program does primarily fulfill a regulatory requirement, it also serves a much broader purpose by protecting the water resources that support the communities, economy, recreation, fisheries, and quality of life in our County.

Whatcom County Source Control Program is developed and governed by the [Federal Clean Water Act](#), [the Washington State NPDES Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit](#), the Whatcom County [16.36](#), [16.38](#) and [24.07](#) ordinances and codes, and is managed by Whatcom County Health and Community Services with support of Whatcom County Public Works.

Why Source Control Matters

Stormwater pollution is one of the leading threats to water quality in urban and developed areas. Pollutants such as oil, sediment, chemicals, trash, nutrients, metals, and other contaminants may have immediate impacts on water quality, aquatic habitat, shellfish resources, and public infrastructure that can affect all citizens in Whatcom County.

Rainfall and runoff can pick up pollutants from industrial yards, commercial properties, parking lots, maintenance activities, waste storage areas, and other outdoor operations. Once these pollutants enter a storm drain, they are often carried directly to nearby surface waters and groundwater recharge areas.

Preventing pollution at its source, rather than cleaning it up after it's made its way to the environment, is much easier and cheaper than trying to clean up a lake or bay after the harm is done. Small improvements in daily operations, such as proper material storage, spill prevention, equipment maintenance, and housekeeping practices, can significantly reduce pollutant discharges and help maintain healthy waterways.

For Whatcom County, source control is particularly important because local waters ultimately connect to sensitive aquatic environments, including salmon-bearing streams, shellfish-growing areas, wetlands, and the marine waters of Puget Sound. Protecting these resources benefits the environment, supports local industries and recreation, and helps preserve the natural character of the region.

What We Do

We focus on education and support first. Our main goal is to help you understand local requirements, find practical solutions, and prevent pollution before it happens.

The Whatcom County Source Control Program works to:

- Prevent pollutants from entering the stormwater system and local waterways.
- Conduct inspections of commercial, industrial, institutional, and other high-priority properties.
- Provide education and training on how to manage runoff and avoid spills.
- Investigate complaints and reports of potential illegal dumping or leaks.
- Identify and address conditions that may contribute to stormwater pollution.
- Promote implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Support compliance with local, state, and federal stormwater requirements.
- Coordinate with other County programs involved in water quality protection and stormwater management.

The program emphasizes education, outreach, and technical assistance FIRST whenever possible. Our goal is to help businesses and property owners understand

stormwater requirements, identify practical solutions, and work together with the private sector to achieve compliance before pollution problems occur.

Button: What can I expect on a Source Control Inspection

While we do our best to schedule visits at least seven days in advance of a site visit, you may also be visited unannounced by a Source Control Inspector (SCI), especially if a complaint has been generated or active pollutants are witnessed discharging from your property. [Watch this video to learn more.](#)

Here is what happens during a visit:

1. **Introduction:** You can expect the Source Control inspector to identify themselves and request to meet with the business owner/manager or property manager.
2. **Site Walk:** The inspector will ask you to participate in a walk around the property. We understand that you are busy and will try to be respectful of that. If you or an assigned staff person can not participate, the Source Control Inspector will conduct the inspection without you.
The source control inspector will look for potential pollution risks both inside (mostly back of house and not in front of customers) and outside the business. This may involve gaining access to locked areas, pulling lids on drainage structures, and taking water samples.
3. **Review & Follow-up:** After the walkthrough, the inspector will go over their findings with you on-site if you are available. Within 5 business days, you will receive a written report. It will confirm your site passed, or provide steps needed to fix any issues, along with a deadline to complete them.

We Are Here to Help

Many businesses and property owners want to do the right thing but may not know which stormwater practices apply to their operations. Whatcom County Source Control Inspectors are available to answer questions, explain requirements, provide technical assistance, and connect businesses with resources that can help reduce stormwater pollution.

Inspections are not solely about compliance, since they are also great opportunities to discuss site-specific conditions, identify practical and cost-effective solutions, and help businesses implement **their own** effective pollution prevention measures. The County's approach is intended to be collaborative and focused on achieving long-term environmental protection.

Finding the Right Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are the tools and techniques used to prevent pollutants from entering stormwater. These can range from simple housekeeping practices to more advanced water treatment or containment systems.

Common BMPs include:

- Covering outdoor materials and waste containers.
- Cleaning up spills immediately.
- Properly storing chemicals and liquids.
- Maintaining vehicles and equipment properly to prevent leaks.
- Sweeping instead of spraying outdoor surfaces.
- Protecting storm drains during outdoor work activities.
- Implementing spill prevention and response procedures.

The primary source of BMP guidance in Washington is the [Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington](#). Whatcom County staff utilize this document to help identify BMPs that are appropriate for specific business activities, industries, or site conditions.

Other Resources Include:

[Pollution Prevention for Small Businesses](#)

[Basic Stormwater BMP Training for Businesses](#)

[Private Stormwater System Maintenance](#)

Hazardous Waste ManagementFree Hazardous Waste Assistance

You may qualify for low-cost help to safely manage and dispose of old hazardous waste. Proper management and disposal of hazardous materials is an important part of stormwater pollution prevention and pollutant source control, and can help reduce compliance risks for businesses and the public.

Businesses generating hazardous or potentially hazardous wastes can be eligible for technical assistance, waste management guidance, pollution prevention support, and disposal resources through local and regional hazardous waste programs. For questions regarding hazardous waste disposal, contact the Disposal of Toxics program

with questions at 360-380-4640 Whatcom County staff can help connect businesses with available services and resources beyond the Source Control Program.

Vendors, Suppliers, and Service Providers

In many cases, though not all, implementing stormwater BMPs requires specialized products, equipment, or services. Businesses may choose to work with qualified vendors and suppliers for services such as:

- Spill prevention equipment.
- Secondary containment systems.
- Covered storage structures.
- Stormwater treatment devices.
- Sweeping and maintenance services.
- Hazardous waste management.
- Industrial cleaning services.
- Environmental consulting and training.

While Whatcom County does not endorse specific companies, staff may provide information regarding common BMP solutions and direct businesses to industry resources that can assist with implementation. Business or property owners are responsible for finding suitable service providers when needed.

Looking for stormwater service support? Whatcom County Public Works maintains a [list of local drainage facilities contractors.](#)

Resources

Businesses and property owners are encouraged to take advantage of available stormwater and pollution prevention resources, including:

- Stormwater BMP guidance documents.
- Industry-specific pollution prevention fact sheets.
- Source control inspection guidance.
- Spill prevention and response resources.
- Hazardous waste management assistance.

- Municipal stormwater permit information.
- Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington guidance.
- Local and regional pollution prevention programs.

Additional resources and educational materials are available through [Whatcom County's stormwater program](#) and the [Washington State Department of Ecology](#).

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Working Together to Protect Water Quality

Protecting water quality is a shared responsibility. Whether you operate a business, manage a facility, work on a construction site, or maintain commercial property, your daily activities can impact our environment.

Have questions or need assistance? Reach out to the Whatcom County Source Control Program for education, technical assistance, pollution prevention, and other support to help protect the valuable water resources that make our County unique.

Source Control Program FAQs

Jen's edits

In 2026, Whatcom County launched a new program to prevent stormwater pollution from businesses with pollutant generating activities. This program is called "Source Control" and is required under the County's [Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit](#).

By taking action to prevent pollution, this program will help keep our streams, lakes, and Salish Sea healthy for residents, businesses, and wildlife. This is accomplished through technical assistance visits that are designed to reduce or eliminate pollutants at the source.

A local stormwater inspector will meet with your organization to evaluate current activities and practices. They will discuss concerns, observations, solutions, and work directly with the business owner to help solve common challenges around hazardous materials, stormwater, solid waste, and spill prevention. This collaborative process limits liability, reduces risk, and improves work environments.