

1.1.72 The Regulations and their Requirements

Licences

The principal regulatory mechanism under the CWA is the issuing of licences under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Licences are required for discharging wastewater whether it be municipal, industrial, commercial or -- in some cases -- agricultural. Beginning in 1993, licences are also required for industrial and municipal stormwaters.

The licence specifies the permitted quantity and quality of discharge and sets out restrictions. It normally lasts for five years.

An NPDES licence specifies well defined criteria under which wastewaters may be discharged into surface waters (rivers, lakes, reservoirs, retention basins, oceans, estuaries, etc).

Some other types of compulsory licensing are worth mentioning even though they go beyond the subject of this report:

- . for the treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous wastes;
- . for the control of air pollution and the restriction of emissions of certain pollutants into the atmosphere;
- . for the management of solid wastes (handling, treatment and disposal).

Effluent³ Standards

To meet the requirements of the CWA, the EPA has developed national effluent guidelines for 51 categories of industry whose liquid wastes are deemed highly damaging to the environment.

³ EFFLUENT: a residual liquid which is the byproduct of human activities (for example, wastewater or liquid industrial waste) and may be discharged into the environment. The wastewater may be treated or untreated; it flows out of treatment plants, sewers or industry, usually into surface waters.