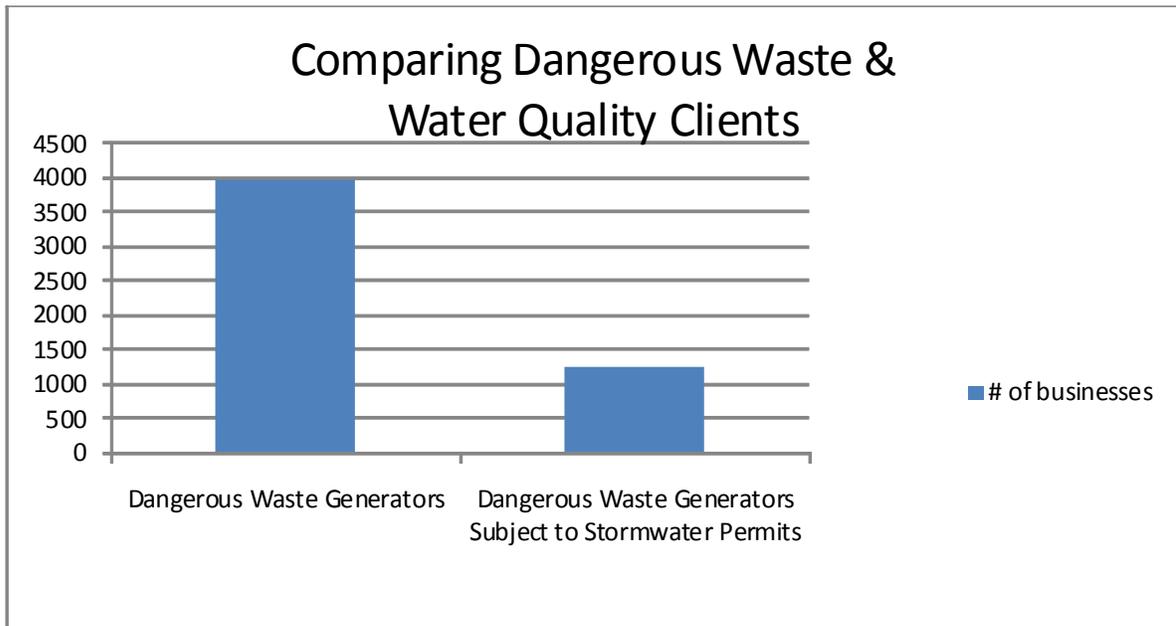


Dangerous waste inspections are vital to solving the stormwater problem in Puget Sound.

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) conducts dangerous waste inspections to address the risks to Puget Sound from contaminated runoff at thousands of businesses that are not subject to Ecology’s industrial stormwater permit. There are nearly 4,000 businesses in Washington that are identified as dangerous waste generators and use significant amounts of hazardous material. Less than one-third are required to have an industrial stormwater permit (see table below). Thousands of other smaller businesses with the potential to contaminate Puget Sound with stormwater runoff, such as typical auto repair shops, are also not required to get an industrial stormwater permit.



Dangerous waste inspections fill the gap

While Ecology’s industrial stormwater permits don’t apply to most businesses handling hazardous materials, the dangerous waste regulations do. Ecology’s Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction (HWTR) program regulates and inspects businesses that handle hazardous materials and dangerous waste. These include businesses required to get an industrial stormwater permit, as well as those that are not.

Dangerous waste inspections are a critical regulatory line of defense between millions of pounds of dangerous waste and stormwater contamination. Since 2002, dangerous waste inspections resolved nearly 1,000 serious environmental threats – those with real potential of dangerous waste getting into the environment, such as hazardous materials leaking or spilling from unsafe containers.

Since 2008, Ecology's inspections found that 50 percent of businesses identified as dangerous waste generators had at least one waste management violation considered a threat to the environment. This represents the highest rate in 20 years. Sixteen percent of these inspections found spills of hazardous materials into the environment. These violations directly increase the risk of contaminated stormwater runoff. During economic downturns, some businesses stockpile dangerous wastes and pay less attention to keeping hazardous materials out of the environment. A few illegally dump or bury them. Some will go out of business, leaving hazardous materials behind that can contaminate stormwater and find their way into Puget Sound.

Working together to solve the problem

Recently, Ecology coordinated inspections with local government, to address the risk to stormwater with its Urban Waters and Local Source Control projects. These site visits combine elements of dangerous waste and water quality inspections. Urban Waters inspections focus on businesses in highly industrial areas – the Duwamish River in Seattle, Commencement Bay in Tacoma, and the Spokane River in Spokane – while Local Source Control Specialists focus on smaller businesses in the Puget Sound area. Since 2007, these inspections have helped nearly 3000 businesses manage and minimize their risks to human health and the environment.

For more information contact Darin Rice of the Department of Ecology's Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program at 360-407-6881.

Special accommodations:

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired call the Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program at 360-407-6700. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.