

# Triage Guideline – Pollution Reports

Environmental Regulation Division

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### Document change history

The following table records the history of any significant changes made to this document. The version number of the document is incremented as follows:

- by 1.0 for significant changes
- by 0.1 for changes made for clarity and reading ease only

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1.0	5/06/2023	Regulation Division	First version for internal testing.
2.0	24/6/2024	Regulation Division	Version for publication.
2.1	2/7/2024	Regulation Division	Minor updates to Appendix A
2.2	26/03/2025	REX	Addition of Petroleum Regulation examples and MOG updates.
2.3	23/09/2025	REX	Reviewed in preparation for new pollution response database (PCM). Corrected typos.

### Disclaimer

These guidelines do not bind the Division in the exercise of its discretion with respect to the use of its statutory tools and initiation of legal proceedings. It is intended as a guide only.

The information in this publication is for general guidance only. It does not constitute legal or other professional advice and should not be relied on as a statement of the law in any jurisdiction. Because it is intended only as a general guide, it contains generalisations. You should obtain professional advice if you have any specific concern.

The Division has made every reasonable effort to provide current and accurate information, but it does not make any guarantees regarding the accuracy, currency or completeness of that information.

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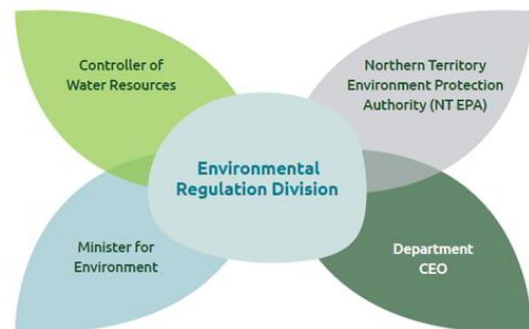
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## 1. Purpose of this guideline

The Environmental Regulation Division in the Department (the Division) has a range of statutory and regulatory responsibilities directed at protecting, and supporting sustainable use of, the environment. The Division supports the:

- Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment,
- the CEO of the Department
- the Controller of Water Resources, and
- the NT EPA,

to administer the Territory's environmental laws.



The Division receives hundreds of reports of potential pollution, waste and other environmental harms from the public and the regulated community each year. These reports are assessed and prioritised based on the impact or the risk of impact to human health and the environment. This process, also known as triaging, enables the Division to focus public resources on the issues that have the potential to cause the greatest environmental harm. This is what it means to be a targeted or risk-based regulator.

This Triage Guideline complements the Division's [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#) and annual [Compliance Plan](#) by explaining how we decide on our response to reports of potential pollution, waste and other environmental harms. When deciding the appropriate action to take in response to a report, the Division will always take into account best practice regulatory principles. This means we aim to be proportionate, accountable, consistent, transparent and targeted (the PACTT principles) whenever we take compliance and enforcement action.

This is a guideline only and is not binding on the Division or its statutory decision makers. It applies to the majority of reports received, but the Division and its statutory decision makers retain a discretion in determining when and how to respond to reports.

## 2. How we receive reports

The Division generally becomes aware of a potential environmental incident through:

- Community reports and complaints, including through the Pollution Hotline
- Self-monitoring and reporting by companies, individuals or other entities
- Officer inspections and/or monitoring and/or surveillance
- Information from other regulators and agencies.

The best way to report pollution is:

### Environmental and waterways

- Online: [Report Form](#)
- NT EPA pollution hotline: **1800 064 567 (24-hour free call)**

### For Onshore gas sites

- Email: [onshoregas.dlpe@nt.gov.au](mailto:onshoregas.dlpe@nt.gov.au)

## 3. Whether we triage

### Jurisdiction assessment

As soon as a report is received the Division's first step is to consider whether it has jurisdiction. This means assessing whether the report relates to laws the Division administers.

The Division has jurisdiction to process reports related to:

- Environmental protection approvals and licences or non-compliances with the general environmental duty (*Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998*)
- Discharges of waste to waterways (*Water Act 1992*)
- Sites with environmental approvals to manage significant impacts (*Environment Protection Act 2019*)
- The onshore petroleum industry where a petroleum interest has been granted, primarily focused on surface impacts such as spills, greenhouse gases, groundwater management, and aquifer protection (*Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016*).

### Reports outside the Division's jurisdiction

If a report falls outside the Division's jurisdiction, no further action will be taken beyond recording the report and informing the appropriate service provider or regulator.

See **Appendix A** for a list of regulators where a report may be referred.

### Multi-Agency Incidents

Some incidents may require the involvement of multiple regulators. For example, a fish kill could be caused by pollution (regulated by the Division) or a biosecurity event (regulated by another agency). In these cases, if the Division has jurisdiction over any part of the incident, it will triage and respond in line with this Triage Guideline. Coordination with other agencies is outlined in section 9 of the [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#).

### Notifying Other Agencies

Certain incidents may be better handled by other regulators and service providers. For example, the Division may determine that incidents of land clearing, fish kills, or noise and litter complaints (unless linked to activities authorised under an approval, plan or licence from the Division) are better dealt with by other agencies or organisations (**Appendix A**).

A full list of other relevant regulators and service providers can be found in **Appendix A**. These agencies operate under their own policies and procedures, which are not covered by this Triage Guideline.

## 4. Risk Criteria

LEVEL	5 Serious impact or risk of impact	4 Major impact or risk of impact	3 Moderate impact or risk of impact	2 Minor impact or risk of impact	1 Low impact or risk of impact
<b>IMPACT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>permanent or long-term impact, or potential impact</li> <li>impact is on, or potentially on, a wide-scale or of great intensity</li> <li>widespread or high level of public concern about the incident or impact to public health, safety and wellbeing</li> <li>significant number of substantiated reports of adverse event in a short time period</li> <li>notifiable incident received from a duty-holder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>medium to long-term impact, or potential impact</li> <li>impact is on, or potentially on, a medium to wide-scale or of medium to great intensity</li> <li>high level of public concern or impact to public health, safety or wellbeing</li> <li>multiple reports received of adverse event in a short time period</li> <li>notifiable incident received from a duty-holder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>temporary to medium-term impact, or potential impact</li> <li>impact is on, or potentially on, a localised to medium scale or is of a low to medium intensity</li> <li>moderate level of public concern or impact to public health, safety or wellbeing</li> <li>multiple reports received from different sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transient impact, or potential impact</li> <li>impact is on, or potentially on, a localised scale or is of a low intensity</li> <li>low level of public concern or impact to public health, safety or wellbeing</li> <li>low number of reports received (in urban areas)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no or minimal impact, or potential impact</li> <li>no or very low impact to public health, safety or wellbeing</li> <li>single report, or vague or unsubstantiated report or long period of time between detection and report (in urban areas)</li> </ul>
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>waste or hazardous material containment failures on gas project, mine site or train derailment</li> <li>uncontrolled industrial or landfill fires</li> <li>burning of hazardous materials or tyres</li> <li>direct or indirect alteration of the environment or adverse change, on a large scale, by an onshore petroleum activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dumping of listed wastes on a systematic/large scale</li> <li>hydrocarbon, wastewater or chemical spill of a medium to large scale</li> <li>reports of visible or odorous wastes or contaminants being discharged to water, particularly from industrial or mine sites</li> <li>direct or indirect alteration of the environment or adverse change, on a medium to large scale, by an onshore petroleum activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>erosion and sediment loss from industrial, construction or mine activities</li> <li>illegal dumping of construction and development waste or tyre stockpiles</li> <li>localised loss of containment or waste liquids to land and water</li> <li>multiple reports about impacts of noise and dust on sensitive receptors</li> <li>direct or indirect alteration of the environment or potential adverse change, by an onshore petroleum activity that is within an area of pre-existing disturbance and localised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a single report about dust or noise coming from a construction site or established business</li> <li>a single report of small contained spills of contaminants or wastes</li> <li>appropriate mitigation has already been undertaken or is underway</li> <li>direct or indirect alteration of the environment, by an onshore petroleum activity that is within an area of pre-existing disturbance and is contained. Mitigation by the regulated entity will be undertaken or is underway.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neighbourhood noise (e.g. noisy pool pumps, animals)</li> <li>helium balloons</li> <li>pool dewatering</li> </ul>

## 5. How we respond

All reports are recorded by the Division.

The impact assessment and triaging process in section 4 informs how the Division responds. The types of responses include:

Type of Response	Details
No action	Report will be recorded by the Division. The Division will <u>not</u> notify other regulators or service providers. Individuals can contact the relevant agencies or organisations in <b>Appendix A</b> .
Desktop enquires	Officers will undertake desktop enquiries to determine if any action is required in accordance with the Division's <a href="#">Compliance and Enforcement Policy</a> .
Inspection	Officers will undertake an inspection to determine if any action is required in accordance with the Division's <a href="#">Compliance and Enforcement Policy</a> .
Notify	The Division will notify other service providers or regulators (as appropriate).

The Division will endeavour to respond to the report as soon as practicable but **no later than** the timeframes set out in the table below.

See section 6 of this guideline for more information on when we will not take action.

The desktop enquiries or an inspection response will inform what action the Division may take in accordance with its [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#) and [Enforcement Guideline](#).

Level	Type of response*	Timeframe*
<b>1 Low impact or risk of impact</b>	No action	N/A
<b>2 Minor impact or risk of impact</b>	Desktop enquiries. This will depend on compliance priorities at the time and resourcing availability.	< 28 business days
	Notify	< 28 business days
<b>3 Moderate impact or risk of impact</b>	Desktop enquiries and potential inspection.	< 28 business days (or as soon as practicable for remote areas)
	Notify	< 7 business days
<b>4 Major impact or risk of impact</b>	Notify	< 24 hours
	Desktop enquiries and inspection	As soon as practicable but within 14 business days
<b>5 Serious impact or risk of impact</b>	Notify. Emergency services will be included in notification.	As soon as possible but within < 24 hours
	Desktop inquiries and inspection	As soon as practicable but within 72 hours

\*Response and timeframes for inspections are always subject to the location/remoteness of an incident and occupational health and safety considerations.

## 6. When we do not action

As provided in the Division's [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#), the Division is a risk-based and targeted regulator and focuses its resources on those circumstances that will, or have the potential to, have the most serious impact to the environment.

The Division is not a complaint handling body and rarely becomes involved in individual disputes. It is unlikely to pursue:

- One-off, isolated and low impact events
- Conduct that has caused no or minimal harm
- Individual environmental nuisance issues
- Matters that are more appropriately resolved directly between the parties (e.g. noisy neighbours)
- Reports where insufficient details are provided, including in relation to the location of the incident
- Issues that are better considered by industry-specific regulators that have the regulatory focus and expertise to properly assess the issue (for instance noise or litter from premises licensed under the *Liquor Act 2019*).

Reports about odour and noise often fall into these categories, for example:

- Neighbourhood noise (e.g. noise impacts from pool pumps, air-conditioning units, generators, home renovations, televisions, garden tools, social gatherings, birds and animals)
- Domestic odours (e.g. from septic systems and birds and animals)
- Anti-social behaviour
- Machinery noise from a construction site or established business that is not subject to an environmental licence (e.g. rock breaking, heavy machinery noise).

Other reports that generally fall into these categories include:

- Visual impacts
- Minor liquid spills (particularly if they are contained)
- Minor dust events
- Litter.

There are often alternative and more suitable pathways to addressing these kind of incidents. For a list of agencies that can assist, see **Appendix A** of this guideline.

## 7. How we deal with your information

The Division collects your information to identify who is making a report and why.

The Division may use your information as follows:

- to investigate and evaluate non-compliance or contravention of Territory laws
- to contact you to provide updates on your report or to seek further details about it
- to investigate the provision of any false information.

If you consent, your information may be provided to relevant local councils or Northern Territory Government departments or agencies.

You may contact the Division directly at 1800 064 567 or [pollution@nt.gov.au](mailto:pollution@nt.gov.au) to request access to your personal information. Read the [DLPE privacy policy](#).

## 8. Appendix A. Other Regulators and Service Providers

For a genuine emergency phone '000' – More information at [Triple Zero - Home](#)

The contact telephone numbers below should be used when an approach to the person causing the problem has not been or is unlikely to be successful. A list of contacts is maintained on the NT EPA website and copied below.

For low risk matters (level 1), the Division will not notify the responsible agency. Individuals will need to directly contact the relevant agency.

Issue or Concern	Contact
Agriculture and veterinary chemicals - spray drift	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Plant Biosecurity Phone: 08 8999 2344 Email: <a href="mailto:chemicals@nt.gov.au">chemicals@nt.gov.au</a>
Air Quality	Department of Health Phone: 1800 095 646
Asbestos - human health issues	Department of Health Phone: 1800 095 646
Asbestos - in the workplace	NT WorkSafe Phone: 1800 019 115 Email: <a href="mailto:ntworksafe@nt.gov.au">ntworksafe@nt.gov.au</a>
Building, plumbing and swimming pool safety	Building Advisory Service (BAS) Phone: 08 8999 8985 Email: <a href="mailto:bas@nt.gov.au">bas@nt.gov.au</a>
Development and planning	Development Assessment Services (DAS) and Lands Planning For sites with development permit or land use complaints <a href="#">Zoned land: development and land use complaints   NT.GOV.AU</a>
Fish Kills	Fish Watch Hotline (24 hr) Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Phone: 1800 891 136
Food safety	Department of Health Phone: 1800 095 646
Injured marine wildlife	Parks & Wildlife Department of Tourism & Hospitality Phone: 1800 453 941
Litter on council land	Contact your local council Contact details at: <a href="#">NT Councils</a>
Litter on Crown land	Land Administration – Crown Land Phone: 08 8999 6886
Litter in parks and reserves	Parks and Wildlife

	Department of Tourism & Hospitality Email: <a href="mailto:parkmanagement.pwcnt@nt.gov.au">parkmanagement.pwcnt@nt.gov.au</a>
Mining (environmental regulator)	Department of Lands, Planning and Environment <a href="mailto:mineralinfo.dlpe@nt.gov.au">mineralinfo.dlpe@nt.gov.au</a> <a href="#">Report a mining environmental incident   NT.GOV.AU</a>
Mining and Exploration	<a href="#">Mining and exploration   NT.GOV.AU</a>
Noise	See table below.
Petroleum	See table below.
Poison	Poisons Information Centre Phone: 13 11 26
Safety, serious injuries, dangerous incidents	NT WorkSafe Phone: <a href="tel:1800019115">1800 019 115</a> Web: <a href="#">NT WorkSafe website.</a>
Sewage	Power and Water Corporation Phone: 1800 245 090 Web: <a href="mailto:customerservice@powerwater.com.au">customerservice@powerwater.com.au</a>
Smoky motor vehicles	Motor Vehicle Registry Darwin email: <a href="mailto:mvrtestshed.darwin@nt.gov.au">mvrtestshed.darwin@nt.gov.au</a> Alice Springs email: <a href="mailto:mvrtestshed.alicesprings@nt.gov.au">mvrtestshed.alicesprings@nt.gov.au</a>
Water Quality	<b>Bore Water</b> Department of Health Phone: 1800 095 646  <b>Town Water</b> Power & Water Corporation Phone: 1800 245 090 Email: <a href="mailto:customerservice@powerwater.com.au">customerservice@powerwater.com.au</a>

Noise Issues	Contact
Noise - barking dogs, birds	Local council Contact details at: <a href="#">NT Councils</a>
Noise - excessive vehicle and motorcycle	Motor Vehicle Registry Darwin email: <a href="mailto:mvrtestshed.darwin@nt.gov.au">mvrtestshed.darwin@nt.gov.au</a> Alice Springs email: <a href="mailto:mvrtestshed.alicesprings@nt.gov.au">mvrtestshed.alicesprings@nt.gov.au</a>
Noise - licensed venues and patron	NT Licensing Commission Email: <a href="mailto:directorliquorlicensing.ditt@nt.gov.au">directorliquorlicensing.ditt@nt.gov.au</a>
Noise - domestic arguments if it is not an emergency	NT Police Force Phone: 131 444
Noise – neighbourhood (i.e noisy pool pump, gates)	Attempt to resolve the matter directly with the tenant, agency, owner or body corporate. Seek assistance from the Community Justice Centre. The Community Justice Centre is a Northern Territory Government service that offers free community mediation at local venues across the Territory.

	<p>2B1 CASCOM Centre                  13 - 17 Scaturchio Street                  Casuarina NT 0810                  cjc@nt.gov.au                  PO Box 41964                  Casuarina NT 0811</p> <p>Free call: 1800 000 473</p>
Noise - party and anti-social behaviour	<p>NT Police Force                  Phone: 131 444</p>
Noise - vehicle and property alarms	<p>NT Police Force                  Phone: 131 444</p>
Noise - civil/ private aircraft	<p>Air Services Australia                  Phone: 1800 802 584                  Web: <a href="https://airservicesaustralia.com/community/environment/aircraft-noise">airservicesaustralia.com/community/environment/aircraft-noise</a></p>
Noise - military aircraft	<p>Department of Defence                  Phone: 1300 333 362                  Web: <a href="http://defence.gov.au/aircraftnoise">http://defence.gov.au/aircraftnoise</a></p>

Petroleum Specific Issues	Contact
Environmental impact assessment under the <i>Environment Protection Act 2019</i> , including discretionary powers to call in a proposed action	<p>Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority                  P: 08 8924 4218                  E: <a href="mailto:eia.ntepa@nt.gov.au">eia.ntepa@nt.gov.au</a></p>
Energy	<p><a href="#">Energy   NT.GOV.AU</a></p>
Energy Titles	<p>Energy Titles Unit                  P: 08 8999 5263  <a href="mailto:energytitles.dme@nt.gov.au">energytitles.dme@nt.gov.au</a></p>
Land access, and well integrity	<p>Department of Mining and Energy                  Mining Development                  P: 08 8999 5322                  F: 08 8981 7106  <a href="mailto:titles.info@nt.gov.au">titles.info@nt.gov.au</a></p>
Sacred sites and authority certificates	<p>Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority                  P: 08 8999 4365                  E: <a href="mailto:enquiries.aapa@aapant.org.au">enquiries.aapa@aapant.org.au</a></p>
Water extraction regulation	<p>Water Resources Division                  Department of Lands, Planning and Environment                  P: 08 8999 4455                  E: <a href="mailto:water.regulation@nt.gov.au">water.regulation@nt.gov.au</a></p>