Talk 3: Water Protection

Why This Matters

Water is one of our most precious resources. Contaminated water from our operations can harm aquatic life, pollute drinking water sources, and damage ecosystems downstream. Once water is polluted, it's extremely difficult and expensive to clean.

How We Can Pollute Water

- ✓ Sediment and soil washing into drains during rain
- ✓ Chemicals, oils, or fuels entering storm water systems
- ✓ Wash water from cleaning equipment or vehicles
- ✓ Concrete wash-out water entering waterways
- ✓ Waste materials blocking drains and causing overflows

> ⚠ **Critical: Storm Drains vs Sewer Drains**
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> **Storm drains** typically flow directly to rivers, streams, or the ocean without treatment. Never allow pollutants to enter storm drains!
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> **Sewer drains** go to treatment plants. However, most site drains are storm drains, so treat all drains as if they flow directly to the environment.

Water Protection Best Practices

- ✓ Install and maintain sediment control measures (silt fences, barriers)
- ✓ Keep all drains and grates clear of debris and sediment
- ✓ Cover stockpiles of soil, sand, or other materials during rain
- ✓ Use designated wash-down areas with proper drainage systems
- ✓ Never hose down oily or contaminated areas
- ✓ Clean up spills before they reach drains
- ✓ Minimize exposed soil areas and stabilize them quickly

Sediment Control

- ✓ Check sediment controls daily, especially before and after rain
- ✓ Repair damaged silt fences or barriers immediately
- ✓ Remove built-up sediment when it reaches 1/3 the fence height
- ✓ Install controls before any earth-disturbing work begins
- ✓ Report erosion issues before they become major problems

Vehicle and Equipment Washing

- ✓ Only wash vehicles in designated wash-down areas
- ✓ Never wash equipment near drains or waterways
- ✓ Use environmentally friendly cleaning products where possible
- ✓ Report any discolored water leaving the site
- ✓ For concrete trucks: use designated concrete wash-out areas only

> 🚨 **If You See Water Pollution**
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> 1. **STOP** the source immediately if possible
> 2. **CONTAIN** the pollutant before it spreads
> 3. **REPORT** to supervisor right away
> 4. **DOCUMENT** with photos if safe to do so

Weather Awareness

- ✓ Check weather forecasts daily
- ✓ Prepare for rain by securing materials and checking controls
- ✓ Inspect site after heavy rain for damage or pollution
- ✓ Never work during heavy rain if it will cause erosion

Discussion Points

- ✓ Where do our storm drains discharge to?
- ✓ Have you seen any water pollution issues on site?
- ✓ Are our sediment controls working effectively?
- ✓ What can we improve to better protect water quality?

> **Remember: All Water Leads Somewhere**
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> Every drop of polluted water that leaves our site ends up in someone's drinking water, someone's fishing spot, or someone's beach. Protect water like your family depends on it – because someone's family does.