

## Protecting waterways from fuel spills

In 2003, a gravel truck slammed into a passenger vehicle at a busy intersection in Kelowna, sending gallons of fuel from its ruptured gas tank across the pavement.

Firefighters quickly moved to contain the massive fuel spill that was seeping into the city's storm drains. Considering that one gallon of gasoline can contaminate one million gallons of groundwater, city officials held their breath.

The City of Kelowna knows that long after broken glass and twisted metal are cleared, hydrocarbon spills from car accidents pose very real threats. Having researched the significant impact of traffic accident leaks on water systems, Kelowna was especially concerned about oil and fuel washing up on the shore of the picturesque Lake Okanagan. At the accident scene, firefighters managed to contain the spill and were shocked to discover there was absolutely no oil in the storm sewer pipelines.

City officials confirmed the oil and fuel from the collision had been completely captured by the recently installed Stormceptor System. The Stormceptor's patented technology ensured the fuel was captured and contained within the unit. With easy access to the man-way, the unit was later easily emptied of its contents by a local maintenance operator.

"I don't think (the Stormceptor's role) was highly publicized, but it certainly was appreciated," said Alan Newcombe, the former Drainage Manager for the City of Kelowna. "Without it, you can imagine there would have been quite the environmental effect."

Along with Newcombe, the city breathed an enormous sigh of relief as many of its 105,000 residents, as well as tourists, flock to Lake Okanagan every summer to swim, canoe and sail. Hikers, skiers and bird-watchers also enjoy the nearby provincial conservation areas year-round. If the fuel had reached the lake, hydrocarbons would have quickly caused oxygen depletion, leading to dead fish, coating of waterfowl and other harmful effects. Newcombe noted the intersection where the accident took place was also very close to a creek that housed a commercial fishery.

Closing the lake down to the public for any length of time would be an economic and environmental disaster. The tally for lost revenue, not to mention the cost of any clean-up projects, would quickly skyrocket.

Determined to protect its waterways and the lake, Kelowna now boasts 21 Stormceptor Systems at busy intersections. Some intersections are equipped with as many as four separate units to ensure any spills are caught.

With its simple design, ability to contain pollutants and small footprint, Stormceptor is ideal for Kelowna's long-term pollution prevention strategy.

