

Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination

Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination is a major component of a municipal stormwater management program. Every time someone uses the storm drain or a ditch as a disposal system, they're causing an impact downstream. That's because storm sewers and ditches don't go to wastewater treatment plants. Storm drains are separated in most instances from the sanitary system. That's by design. Our wastewater treatment facilities simply couldn't handle the volume of stormwater that is created in every storm. Most stormwater systems are separated from the sanitary systems. Since this water is released unfiltered and untreated into streams, lakes and wetlands, municipalities are required to ensure that the water leaving their systems is as clean as possible. Part of that is knowing all of the sources that are flowing into the system and it's not always just water. Septic systems, used oil, carpet cleaning fluid, wastewater...you name it, someone has disposed of it into the storm system and that waste is now in our waterways. These are called illicit discharges to the storm system. Municipalities are required under the MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) regulations to identify and eliminate those illicit discharges. Here are 12 actions that homes and businesses can take to prevent illicit discharges into the storm sewer system.



Top 12 Actions - Dealing with the dirty dozen

- 1. Eliminate connections to storm sewers.** Make sure that wastewater, spills or soapy water can't flow into a storm sewer by any drain or stormwater flow.
- 2. Store hazardous materials properly, inside or under cover.**
- 3. Make a current spill response plan and clean up kit accessible.**
- 4. Train employees on spill response and good housekeeping practices.** Repeat training regularly.
5. Use "dry" methods for cleanup and spills. Keep a broom, mop and kitty litter or other absorbent materials handy. Do not use water to rinse off a spill.
- 6. Use a mop sink for cleaning floor mats and equipment.** Pour wash water in the sink, not outside.
- 7. Ensure dumpsters remain covered and leak-proof.** Locate dumpsters away from storm drains.
8. Wash vehicles at a commercial car wash. If you must wash vehicles or equipment outdoors, use water only, or wash on grassy areas and divert soapy water from storm drains.
9. Keep parking lot and service areas clean. Provide trash bins and empty them regularly. Divert water from loading docks.
10. Keep wetlands and shoreline areas clean and in natural condition. Keep these areas free of trash, yard waste, and debris that can pollute or obstruct water flow. If possible, allow vegetation to grow into a natural buffer instead of mowing to wetland edges.
11. Water wisely and limit fertilizer use. Keep water and fertilizer on the grass, not pavement. Consider replacing some lawn area with low-care plantings.
12. Design your site to infiltrate, filter or detain runoff. Divert roof leaders, foundation drains, air conditioning condensate and other clean water to grassy areas, away from pavement and storm drains.