

## Illicit Discharges

### *What are Illicit Discharges?*

Illicit discharges are pollutants that make their way into our waters and cause our water to fall below the recommended quality. Pollutants do not need to necessarily be dumped right into a water source to be considered an illicit discharge. Any sort of “dirty” chemical, or item that makes its way to our waters pollutes our waters and causes a mess of other issues. In short, illicit discharges are any discharge not ENTIRELY composed of stormwater that make their way into the stormwater system.

### *Common Examples of Illicit Discharges*

Many people are under the false assumption that they in no way contribute to pollution of the stormwater system, because they do everything “right”. While this may be true for some people, the vast majority of people do not know that their common actions are actually illicit discharges.

Some common examples of illicit discharges are:

1. Water flowing into the storm sewer from a car wash, washer, washing machine, etc.
  - a. All water not consisting purely of storm water
2. Fertilizer
  - a. Lawn fertilizer sits on the grass until it rains. When it rains, the fertilizer is collected in the rain water that eventually ends up in a storm sewer
3. Pet Feces
  - a. Bacteria from pet feces also gets collected in rain water, if not disposed of properly. The bacteria from feces causes major pollution and health issues.
4. Diapers
  - a. If used diapers are not disposed of correctly, it is very possible that the contents of that diaper get collected in the rain water
5. Garbage
  - a. Leaky garbage bags and dumpsters are another common, yet widely unknown, illicit discharge. Any sort of liquid that leaks out of its bag will eventually make its way to the storm sewer.
6. Septic Tank Seepage / Illegal Sanitary Connections
7. Laundry Wastewater / Detergent
8. Improper Waste Oil Disposal / Auto Fluids Flushing
9. Home Improvement Waste (e.g. concrete, paint)
10. Improper Disposal of Commercial and Industrial Hazardous Waste
11. Pool / Spa Discharge
12. Cooking Grease / Household Waste

**ANYTHING THAT IS NOT DISPOSED OF PROPERLY WILL MAKE ITS WAY INTO THE  
STORM SEWER SYSTEM**

### *Signs of Illicit Discharge*

1. Water running from drains or pipes when it has not recently rained
2. Sudsy or bubbly water
3. Foul odor coming from water
4. Waste/litter around watersite

### *Why Illicit Discharge Matter?*

Illicit Discharge should matter to everyone, because it affects everyone. Some discharges can cause ecosystem changes in the water it flows to, which can in turn affect our environment as a whole. Discharges can cause an excess of water algae, kill aquatic life, and harm animals (and humans) who drink that water. Once one part of the ecosystem begins to change, the rest will follow. We want the water we all use to be safe for everyone. By simply making small changes, we can have a huge positive impact on our environment and water quality.

### *Ways You Can Control Illicit Discharges*

1. Never dump anything down storm drains
2. Use lawn and garden chemicals sparingly; sweep up any excess from driveways, sidewalks and roads
3. Repair vehicle leaks; cover spilled fluids with kitty litter then sweep into household waste
4. Pick up after your pet and dispose of properly
5. Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion-prone areas
6. Keep grass clippings, leaves, litter, and debris out of street gutters and storm drains
7. Direct downspouts onto grassy areas away from paved surfaces
8. Use a commercial car wash or wash your vehicle on the grass instead of the driveway
9. Dispose of used oil, antifreeze, paints and other household chemicals in an approved manner

### *How You Can Get Involved*

1. Volunteer to test water ways, and check for any signs of illicit discharges
2. Spread the word about the impacts of Illicit Discharge
3. Organize a clean up day, to clean up the community of potential discharges
4. Report any illicit discharges or actions that cause illicit discharges