

Illicit Discharges

Stormwater runoff in urban and suburban areas is a major – and visible – source of pollutants in our streams and lakes. Whenever rain or melting snow runs down the street and into the storm drains, the water carries sediment, leaves, and other debris, road deicing salt, oil leaked from cars and many other pollutants.

However, other discharges into a municipal storm drain system may be less visible but are just as damaging. Often people won't associate these activities with water quality. Illicit discharges include:

- spills
- dumping and improper disposal of wastes
- improper storage of materials
- various types of wash water
- septic system failures
- sanitary sewer overflows
- nauthorized connections between sanitary or process wastewater drains and the storm sewers system.

Improper disposal or storage of wastes can be a problem for commercial and industrial facilities, but homeowners can unknowingly contribute to these illicit discharges as well. Storing without cover or dumping refuse, rubbish, garbage, animal waste, litter, yard waste, or other discarded or abandoned objects can cause pollutants to make their way to our water ways.

Illicit discharges are a problem because, unlike wastewater which flows to a wastewater treatment plant, stormwater generally flows to waterways without any additional treatment. Illicit discharges often include pathogens, nutrients, surfactants, and various toxic pollutants.