

Illicit Stormwater Discharges

Identifying and Preventing Stormwater Pollution In Your Neighborhood

Stormwater Runoff

Stormwater runoff is water from rain that does not soak into the ground. It flows from rooftops, paved areas, bare soil, and lawns into storm drains or ditches. Storm drains, ditches and swales collect stormwater runoff and empty it directly to local bodies of water.

Ideally, stormwater runoff would be free of contaminants. In reality, it picks up pollutants such as sediment particles, animal waste, pesticides, fertilizers, salt, oil and grease, soil from dirt roads and debris and transports them to waterways where they are discharged. This is stormwater pollution.



What is an “Illicit Discharge?”

An illicit (illegal) discharge is any discharge to storm drainage system – storm drains, pipes, and ditches – that is not composed entirely of stormwater. Pollutants end up in storm drainage systems in a number of ways, many of which are easily preventable. In some instances, companies or residences have waste pipes tapped into stormwater pipes. In other cases, individuals use the storm drain inlets to dispose of various types of waste.

Examples of Illicit Discharges

- Septic Tank Seepage / Illegal Sanitary Connections
- Improper Waste Oil Disposal / Auto Fluids Flushing
- Home Improvement Waste (e.g. concrete, paint)
- Pesticides and Fertilizers
- Pool / Spa Discharge

Signs of an Illicit Discharge

The point in a storm drainage system where it empties into a body of water is a storm drain outfall. It may be a pipe or ditch. If the outfall is flowing when there has been no recent rainfall, this may indicate an illicit discharge. Visible sewage waste, foul odor, suds or other evidence of contamination, are indicators that an illicit discharge is contaminating the storm drainage system.



Things You Can Do to Protect Water Quality

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

Keep an eye out for inappropriate (“illicit”) amounts of discharge from stormwater pipes, especially during dry weather. This could be a sign that there is a problem, and should be reported immediately to the Town of Windermere at protectourlakes@town.windermere.fl.us.

Stormwater Pollution

Polluted stormwater degrades our lakes, rivers, wetlands and other waterways. Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen can promote the overgrowth of algae and deplete oxygen. Toxic fluids from automobiles and careless application of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers threaten water quality and can kill fish and other aquatic life. Bacteria from animal wastes and improper sanitary sewer or septic tank connections to storm drainage systems can make lakes and waterways unsafe for wading, swimming, and fish consumption. Eroded soil from areas such as dirt roads is a pollutant as well. It clouds the waterway and destroys the habitats of fish and plants and can cause fish kills.



To report a suspected stormwater discharge violation, call:

Town Public Works: (407) 876-2563
protectourlakes@town.windermere.fl.us

<https://www.town.windermere.fl.us>



The Effects of Stormwater Pollution

- Sediment can cloud the water and make it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow. Sediment also can destroy aquatic habitats.
- Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.
- Bacteria and other pathogens can wash into swimming areas and create health hazards, often making beach closures necessary.
- Debris – plastic bags, six pack rings, bottles and cigarette butts – washed into waterbodies can choke, suffocate or disable aquatic life like ducks, fish, turtles and birds.
- Household hazardous wastes like insecticide, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil and other auto fluids can poison aquatic life, land animals and people can become sick or die from eating diseased fish and shellfish or ingesting polluted water.
- Polluted stormwater often affects drinking water sources. This, in turn, can affect human health and increase drinking water costs.

For general stormwater information visit:

<https://www.floridadep.gov/water/stormwater>

<https://www.sfwmd.gov>

<https://www.ocfl.net>

Other Ways You Can Help

Swimming Pool and Spa

- Drain your swimming pool only when a test kit does not detect chlorine levels.
- Whenever possible, drain your pool or spa into the storm drainage system.
- Properly store pool and spa chemicals to prevent leaks and spills, preferably in a covered area to avoid exposure to stormwater.



Septic System Use and Maintenance

- Have your septic system inspected by a professional at least every three years and have the septic tank pumped as necessary (usually every three to five years).
- Care for the septic system drain field by not driving or parking vehicles on it. Plant only grass over and near the drain field to avoid damage from roots.
- Flush responsibly. Flushing household chemicals like paint, pesticides, oil and antifreezes can destroy the biological treatment taking place in the system. Other items such as paper towels and cat litter can clog the septic system and potentially damage components.