

Guide to the Watertown Illicit Discharge Program



Watertown has an Illicit Discharge Program, as mandated by the Clean Water Act. It is being designed to help maintain and protect the quality of the water in our streams, lakes, and rivers. The Illicit Discharge Program supplements existing city ordinances, which make it illegal to discharge pollutants into the storm sewer system or into City waters or waters of the State.

What is prohibited?

- Directly discharging anything that is not composed entirely of stormwater into the storm sewer system or into the city waters is prohibited.
- Examples of prohibited discharges include: commercial power washers, carpet cleaning materials, pavement cutting liquids, concrete truck chutes wash water, paint, grass clippings and other yard waste, household trash, sediment laden construction site runoff, construction debris, and swimming pool drain water.

You can report illicit discharges to the City at 882-6202.

What is the penalty for a violation?

Violators may be fined and also have to pay for the cost of testing, clean-up, and disposal of the pollutants. Additional legal action may be taken.

What discharges are allowed?

The ordinance does not apply to discharges that are made under the terms of a Federal or State (NPDES or SWD) permit or to discharges from fighting fires. Certain everyday types of discharges are also allowed to continue. For example:

- Watering lawns and irrigating landscapes
- Flushing water lines
- Condensation from air conditioners
- Water from crawl spaces and foundation drains
- Runoff from springs or drinking water sources

However, if any of these activities are found to be causing water pollution, Watertown will ask that the activity be stopped or be conducted differently so that our waters are not polluted.

How can I prevent stormwater pollution?

There are three general principles to remember:

1. Keep water from contacting work areas Work areas can be contaminated by raw materials, process liquids, grease, oily wastes, heavy metals, and miscellaneous fluids. Work areas include surfaces used for shipping, for storing outdoor equipment and materials, and for maintaining vehicles. “Run-on stormwater” is water that flows across the working area. It picks up contaminants as it flows. If that water reached a storm drain or ditch, those contaminants will be discharged to the City’s storm sewer system. To keep from discharging contaminated stormwater, you need to keep water from flowing across these contaminated areas and running off into the storm sewer system. For example:

- Keep run-on stormwater from contacting any industrial areas, either indoors or out.
- Install roofs or move industrial operations indoors to keep rain from falling onto work areas.
- Avoid practices like hosing down outdoor areas or washing vehicles where the dirty water will enter the storm sewer system.

2. Keep contaminants off surfaces that will come into contact with water First, carefully look over your site to identify all areas that might contact stormwater or other water that is discharged to the storm sewer system. Then, take special care to keep contaminants off these areas:

- Control and properly clean up all leaks and spills, even minor ones.
- Take a close look at your operating routines and your equipment to see whether any substances are exposed to stormwater that don’t need to be.
- Try to minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides (weed and insect killers). If you must use them, make sure you are using the right amount, follow all label instructions, and dispose of empty containers properly.

3. Educate workers about preventing stormwater pollution The first two principles won’t work unless your coworkers are properly trained. Workers need to understand that improper disposal of materials into the storm sewer system will pollute the City’s waters and could result in penalties. People often do better if they understand why they are being asked to change their work methods. Put up signs to inform and remind your coworkers. For example:

- Proper equipment washing procedures at designed washing areas
- “Close the cover” signs at dumpsters and other storage areas
- Reminders to not “top-off” or overfill fuel tanks
- Dispose of properly

Preventing pollution is good for public.

Let your friends, neighbors, and customers know how you are minimizing wastes and recycling fluids, to show them that you are a good neighbor. Encourage others to do the same!