

What is Storm Water?

Storm water is water from precipitation that flows across the ground and pavement when it rains or when snow and ice melt. The water seeps into the ground or drains into what we call storm sewers. These are the drains you see at street corners or at low points on the sides of streets. Collectively, the draining water is called storm water runoff.

Why is Storm Water "Good Rain Gone Wrong?"

Storm water becomes a problem when it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants as it flows or when it causes flooding and erosion of stream banks. Storm water travels through a system of pipes and roadside ditches that make up storm sewer systems. It eventually flows directly to a lake, river, stream, wetland, or coastal water. All of the pollutants storm water carries along the way empty into our waters, too, because storm water does not get treated!



Pet wastes left on the ground get carried away by storm water, contributing harmful bacteria, parasites and viruses to our water.



Vehicles drip fluids (oil, grease, gasoline, antifreeze, brake fluids, etc.) onto paved areas where storm water runoff carries them through our storm drains and into our water.



Chemicals used to grow and maintain beautiful lawns and gardens, if not used properly, can run off into the storm drains when it rains or when we water our lawns and gardens.

Waste from chemicals and materials used in construction can wash into the storm sewer system when it rains. Soil that erodes from construction sites causes environmental degradation, including harming fish and shellfish populations that are important for recreation and our economy.



Where To Go To Continue the Information Flow

Your community is preventing storm water pollution through a storm water management program. This program addresses storm water pollution from construction, new development, illegal dumping to the storm sewer system, and pollution prevention and good housekeeping practices in municipal operations. It will also continue to educate the community and get everyone involved in making sure the only thing that storm water contributes to our water is ... water! Contact your community's storm water management program coordinator or the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for more information about storm water management.

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| Paid for by Kennett Township | 610-388-1300 |
| PA DEP Southeast Region Water Quality | 484-250-5970 |
| Chester County Conservation District | 610-696-5126 |
| Chester County Water Resources Authority | 610-344-5400 |
| Brandywine Valley Association | 610-793-1090 |

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- Ditch** - Part of the storm sewer system. Most people think that the system is just a series of underground pipes. It can also include ditches used to convey storm water from the land to a receiving lake, river, or stream.
- Fire Hydrant** - Not part of the storm sewer system. Water sprayed from fire hydrants is not storm water, but is allowed by law to enter the storm sewer system.
- Curb with Storm Drain Inlet** - Part of the storm sewer system. Many people do not realize that this is an opening leading to the storm sewer system. Anything going into this inlet (e.g., trash, leaves, improperly disposed of hazardous materials) travel directly to a receiving lake, river, or stream without being treated first. Many communities stencil storm drains with "Do Not Dump" messages to let people know.
- Storm Sewer Outfall** - Part of the storm sewer system. An outfall is where storm water drains from the storm sewer system into a receiving lake, stream, or river. If there is a flow from an outfall when it is raining, there could be a problem with the system or someone has used a storm drain for illegally disposing of materials.
- Toilet** - Not part of the storm sewer system. Wastewater from sinks and toilets in houses and businesses travel through a sewer system constructed to carry sanitary wastes. In some instances, older communities may have a combined sewer system designed to carry both storm water and sanitary waste.
- Septic System** - Not part of the storm sewer system. Homeowners use septic tanks to manage sanitary wastes on-site. Improperly maintained septic systems can leak and contribute pollutants to the storm sewer system, as well as directly to lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Roads and Other Paved Areas** - Not part of the storm sewer system. Roads and other hardened surfaces such as parking lots and sidewalks can accumulate pollutants (e.g., oil, grease, dirt, leaves, pet wastes) that storm water eventually washes into the storm sewer system.
- Storm Drain Inlet** - Part of the storm sewer system. This is another example of what a storm drain may look like. Like the storm drain inlet shown in picture #3, anything that enters this drain will go directly to streams, rivers, and lakes without being treated first. It is important to recognize this as a storm drain to prevent it from being used as a trash can.

When It Rains, It Drains

Understanding Storm Water and How It Can Affect Your Money, Safety, Health, and the Environment

