

Urban Stormwater

Stormwater runoff occurs when rain or snow does not infiltrate the surface because of excess precipitation or an impervious surface (concrete). This surface may be your driveway, sidewalks, or streets, or parking lots. From there it flows into your town's storm sewer system or directly into lakes, rivers, wetlands, streams or coastal waters we use for swimming, fishing and providing drinking water.

What's the big deal about stormwater runoff? Unfortunately, untreated stormwater can carry with it too much soil, nutrients, chemicals from pesticides, insecticides, paint, and used motor oil, and other contaminants. Polluted stormwater runoff is the nation's greatest threat to clean water, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Too much soil dumped into the lakes, rivers and other water bodies can cloud the water, making it difficult for aquatic plants to have enough sunlight to grow. Excessive soil carried by stormwater runoff can also decrease the water body's volume. Too much runoff too fast can also erode the soil. Excessive nutrients, such as phosphorus, dumped into the waters can cause heavy growth of algae.

Household hazardous wastes in stormwater runoff can poison aquatic life and harm the water quality.

What you can do to help prevent harmful stormwater runoff.

In your landscape:

- Use pesticides and fertilizers on your yard sparingly
- Compost or mulch your grass clippings and leaves
- Use native plants in your landscaping to reduce the need for watering during dry periods
- Water during the cool times of the day, and don't overwater your lawn with water running off into the storm drain
- Cover piles of soil or mulch used in landscaping projects
- Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces
- Plant vegetation on bare spots in your yard

In your home:

- Dispose of auto fluids, batteries, paint solvents and other household hazardous wastes at designated drop-off or recycling locations. Do not dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.
- Inspect your septic tank regularly and pump your tank as necessary
- Pick up after your pet. Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method.
- Use a commercial carwash that treats or recycles its wastewater or wash your car on your yard so the water soaks into the ground.

Remember: what you do affects the quality and quantity of the water you drink and use. By using these practices to reduce pollutants from entering your water resources, you are helping protect water now and in the future.

Help save Texas water and make every drop count.

