

# STORMWATER POLLUTION PREVENTION FACT SHEET

## **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 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 and is a concern because of the pollutants it carries.

## **Where does the storm water go?**

Storm water that does not evaporate or seep into the ground drains into underground storm sewer pipe that carry surface runoff to creeks and drainage ways. Every time it rains, thousands of gallons of storm water enter the storm sewer system. As the runoff flows across lawns, driveways, parking lots and streets, it collects pollutants.

## **What is storm water pollution?**

Many people think that pollution in streams, rivers and lakes only comes from industrial facilities or wastewater treatment plants. What people don't realize is that if all these sources of pollution were eliminated, up to half of the pollution would still remain.

The remaining source of pollution that is not caused by specific, identifiable sources is called non-point source pollution. Non-point source pollution is the result of everyday activities. Typical pollutants in urban areas include litter; sediments from exposed soil, pet waste, detergents, pesticides and fertilizers from lawns and gardens, paints, oil, grease and toxic chemicals from motor vehicles, road salts, and household hazardous wastes.

When these materials are improperly used or disposed of, they can be picked up by storm water runoff as it flows across streets, parking lots and lawns. After this storm water runoff travels through the storm sewer system, it is discharged to receiving waters without any treatment. As a result, any pollutant that is dumped on the ground can end up in our creeks, rivers and lakes.

There are serious problems associated with polluted storm water. The pesticides, bacteria and chemicals that may be present in polluted storm water can pose a health risk to people. Aquatic plants and animals living in streams and rivers may become sick or die from contact with polluted storm water. Clogged catch basins can be unsightly and can cause flooding problems. Each of us must be careful to minimize or eliminate substances which may inadvertently pollute our waterways when it rains.

## 10 EASY WAYS YOU CAN STOP STORM WATER POLLUTION

1. Repair oil and cooling system leaks on your car and dispose of used auto fluids and batteries at designated drop-off or recycling locations. Recycle your used motor oil. On annual collection days take household hazardous waste to drop-off locations. Never pour used motor oil or other hazardous materials into a storm drain. Contact the Solid Waste Management Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) for more information on recycling and disposal at (847) 336-9340 or at [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org).
2. Properly manage and dispose of yard wastes (grass clippings, leaves, etc.) and don't put them in the street, gutter or a storm drain. Contact the Public Works Department for more information on leaf and brush pickup programs offered by the Village at (847) 746-1770.
3. Use a proper container for your trash and recyclables. Don't put trash into the street or gutter where it can be washed into the storm sewer system. For more information on recycling, contact the Solid Waste Management Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) for more information on recycling and disposal at (847) 336-9340 or at [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org).
4. Use lawn and garden fertilizers sparingly, and learn about Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers on your lawn or garden. Please don't "double the dose" just for good measure.
5. Pick up after your pet. If you have a dog, clean up its waste and don't allow it to pollute storm water runoff. You can properly dispose of pet waste by flushing it down the toilet or placing it in the trash for regular pickup.
6. Use water-based paints such as latex and wash paintbrushes in the sink with water. When using paint thinner, reuse and recycle it. Never pour unused paint or paint thinner into a storm drain.
7. Take your car to the car wash instead of washing it in the driveway. The runoff from home car washing can contain detergents that are harmful to aquatic life.
8. Use non-toxic alternatives to conventional household cleaners whenever possible. Contact the Solid Waste Management Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) for more information on recycling and disposal at (847) 336-9340 or at [www.swalco.org](http://www.swalco.org) for additional information.
9. Educate your family, friends and neighbors about storm water pollution. Spread the word.
10. Report polluters. If you see a potential storm water quality problem, please call Village Hall at (847) 746-1770. Remember, water pollution is everyone's concern.

**For additional information on surface water quality and storm water pollution prevention issues, please see the websites below:**

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency      [www.epa.state.il.us](http://www.epa.state.il.us)

United States Environmental Protection Agency      [www.epa.gov/npdes/index.cfm](http://www.epa.gov/npdes/index.cfm)

Lake County Stormwater Management Commission      [www.lakecountyil.gov/stormwater](http://www.lakecountyil.gov/stormwater)