



AFTER THE STORM

A Scranton Citizen's Guide to Stormwater Management

What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater runoff occurs when rain or snowmelt causes precipitation to flow over the ground. Driveways, sidewalks, streets, and other impervious surfaces prevent stormwater from soaking into the ground naturally.

Why is Stormwater a Problem?

Stormwater can pick up chemicals, dirt, debris, and other pollutants and flow into a storm sewer system or directly into bodies of water, such as lakes, rivers, or wetlands. Everything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged into waterbodies untreated. This contaminates the water we use to swim in, fish in, or even drink.

The Effects of Pollution

Pollution can have adverse effects on people, animals, fish, and plants.

- Sediments can cloud waters, making it difficult for aquatic plants to grow. It can also destroy aquatic habitats.
- Excess nutrients transferred from stormwater runoff can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they sink to the bottom of the body of water and decompose. This decomposition process removes oxygen from the water, creating low dissolved oxygen levels that aquatic organisms and fish cannot survive in.
- Bacteria and other pathogens can be transported into swimming areas, creating health hazards.
- Debris such as plastic bags, six-pack rings, bottles, and cigarette butts that are washed into waterbodies can choke, suffocate, or disable aquatic life.
- Household hazardous wastes like insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil, and other auto fluids can poison aquatic life. In turn, humans and land animals can become sick or die from eating diseased fish and shellfish or from ingesting polluted water.
- Polluted stormwater affects drinking water sources, which increases risks to human health along with increasing the costs to treat the water.

Stormwater Pollution Solutions

Residential Lawn Care

- Don't overwater your lawn. Consider using a soaker hose instead of a sprinkler.
- Pesticides and fertilizers should be used sparingly, as excess washes off and pollutes streams. Use organic mulch or safer pest control methods when possible.
- Compost or mulch yard waste, and cover piles of dirt or mulch being used in landscaping projects so that they don't wash into storm drains.

Residential Septic Systems

- Inspect your system every three years and pump the tank as necessary (3-5 years).
- Don't dispose of household hazardous waste in sinks or toilets.

Residential Auto Care

- Use a commercial car wash that treats or recycles its wastewater.
- Wash your car on your yard so the water infiltrates into the ground.
- Repair leaks and dispose of used auto fluids and batteries at designated drop-off or recycling locations.

Residential Pet Waste

- Remember to pick up waste after your pet and dispose of it correctly.
 - Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method.

Residential Landscaping

- Think of incorporating permeable pavement, rain barrels, rain gardens and grassy swales, and vegetated filter strips into your home landscaping.

Commercial

- Sweep up litter and other debris from sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots.
- Cover grease storage and dumpsters and keep them clean to avoid leaks.
- Report chemical spills to the local hazardous waste cleanup team.

Construction

- Divert stormwater away from disturbed or exposed areas of the construction site.
- Install silt fences, vehicle mud removal areas, vegetative cover, and other sediment and erosion controls and properly maintain them.
- Minimize areas disturbed during construction projects, and seed and mulch bare areas as soon as possible.

Automotive Facilities

- Clean up spills immediately and properly dispose of cleanup materials.
- Provide cover over fueling stations, and design facilities for spill containment.
- Properly maintain fleet vehicles to prevent oil, gas, and other discharges from being washed into local waterbodies.
- Install and maintain oil/water separators.

For more information about stormwater management and illicit discharges, please visit scrantonpa.gov and epa.gov

Information on this guide sourced from epa.gov