

Storm Water Pollution Facts

What is Stormwater Runoff?

Storm water runoff occurs when rain flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent storm water runoff from naturally soaking into the ground.

Why is stormwater runoff a problem?

Storm water picks up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants and flows directly to a lake, stream, river, Anything that enters a storm drain or ditch system is discharged untreated into the rivers and lakes we use for providing drinking water, swimming, and fishing.

Water Pollution Fact #1: Water from rain, storm drains, and ditches flows directly to our rivers and lakes with little or no treatment. Storm drains and ditches are DIFFERENT than sewers. They are NOT CONNECTED to a treatment plant.

Water Pollution Fact #2: We all live in a watershed. What you do on your property affects our water, even if you don't live near a water. A watershed is an area of land which drains to the lowest point, usually a stream or river.

Water Pollution Fact #3: Small amounts of contaminants from all over the land add up to cause pollution in our water. Yes, even the little things matter. You WILL make a difference, no matter how small, if you change the way you do some things.

Water Pollution Fact #4: Failing septic systems pollute. Untreated wastewater from failing septic systems can contaminate nearby streams, drinking water sources, and bays.

- Inspect your septic system every 3-5 years.
- Pump as needed.

Water Pollution Fact #5: Soap from washing your car at home pollutes. Soap and dirt from washing your car flows through our storm drains and ditches and end up in our river and lakes untreated.

- Wash your car at a commercial car wash, on the grass, or on a graveled area.

Water Pollution Fact #6: Soap from charity car washes can pollute if not handled properly.

- Commercial car wash water goes to the sewer and is treated. Hold your charity car wash at a commercial car wash with a charity car wash program.

Water Pollution Fact #7: Oil and antifreeze from leaking cars pollutes. When it rains, water runs over the ground and picks up oil, antifreeze, and other pollutants and carries them to our streams and bays.

- Put a drip tray under your car to catch car leaks.
- Fix car leaks.

Water Pollution Fact #8: Garden and lawn chemicals pollute.

- Pull weeds by hand.
- Avoid use of chemicals. If necessary, use sparingly and as directed.

- Call for information on alternatives to weed and bug killers.

Water Pollution Fact #9: Household cleaners and chemicals can pollute. Cleaners and chemicals used or disposed of outside can end up in our water. These same cleaners and chemicals can cause harm to septic systems and wastewater treatment plants.

- Use the entire container before disposal.
- Do not dispose of household chemicals and cleaners outside.

Water Pollution Fact #10: Pet waste pollutes our water.

- Scoop, double bag, and throw pet waste in the garbage.

Water Pollution Fact #11: Waste from livestock pollutes our water. When it rains, water runs over fields and pastures and can carry harmful bacteria from livestock waste to streams and provides unwanted fertilizer in streams.

- Compost livestock waste.
- Fence livestock from stream access.

Water Pollution Fact #12: Driveways and walkways can be sources of water pollution. Oil, antifreeze, and other pollutants can collect on your driveway. If you hose down the driveway, the water carries all these pollutants to the streams.

- Sweep your driveway and walkways instead of hosing down.

Water Pollution Fact # 13: Lawn clippings and yard waste in ravines and ponds can become unwanted fertilizer for rivers. Too much plant growth in streams can use up all the oxygen and kill fish and aquatic life.

- Bag your yard waste.
- Compost your yard waste.
- Use a mulching mower.

Water Pollution Fact # 14: Too much soil in runoff can pollute. Soil from erosion carries pollutants.

- Plant vegetation on or cover bare ground.
- Cover piles of soil.
- Fence livestock from water access.

Water Pollution Fact # 15: Oil and antifreeze pollute our water when disposed of improperly. Oil and antifreeze that are spilled during maintenance or are dumped on the ground can be carried by runoff to our rivers and lakes.

- Clean up small spills with rags. For larger spills, use absorbent kitty litter and sweep it up with a broom.
- Use drip pans when unclipping hoses, unscrewing filters, or removing other parts.
- Recycle used oil and antifreeze at S.A.F.E. Recycling, 702 Warehouse Road. Call 659-0722 for more information.

Water Pollution Fact # 16: Waste from household repairs can pollute our water. Contractors and service people must properly dispose of chemicals and water used during their work.

- Make sure contractors you hire dispose of chemicals properly.
- Request use of non-toxic products.

Water Pollution Fact # 17: Littering pollutes. Litter thrown on the ground can end up in our storm drains, ditches, and streams.

- Throw all litter in appropriate trash cans.
- Keep litter out of pick up truck beds and cover loads so items aren't blown off to the ground.
- Recycle and reuse items whenever possible.