

Illicit Discharge

What is an illicit discharge?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines an illicit discharge as “...any discharge to the municipal separate storm sewer system that is not composed entirely of stormwater...”



Stormwater is rain or melted snow and ice that flow over the ground. Impervious surfaces, such as rooftops, sidewalks, roadways, and parking lots, inhibit stormwater runoff from seeping into the soil. As the water runs off paved surfaces, it picks up oil, gasoline, chemicals, litter and any other substance that has been deposited on the ground. The stormwater enters a storm drain and is carried and released into a water body, such as a stream.

One common misconception is that stormwater is treated after it enters a storm drain. Typically, this is not the case. In most instances stormwater is not cleaned or treated before entering a stream, river, or lake. Photo (above left): storm drain in Lexington, Kentucky.

A municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) refers to the system of pipes, ditches, and/or gullies, managed by a government entity, used for stormwater collection and distribution. The release of non-stormwater discharge into a stormwater sewer system, either accidentally or purposely, is considered an illicit discharge. Illicit discharges enter the stormwater sewer system through direct or indirect connections. An example of a direct connection is wastewater piping connected to a stormwater drain. An example of an indirect connection is dumping oil straight into a stormwater drain.

The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land. -Luna Leopold



Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

Examples of illicit discharges include:

- Vehicle wash water
- Gasoline and automotive fluid spills
- Improper disposal of yard waste, such as leaves
- Illegal dumping of household hazardous waste, such as paint
- Sanitary waste water from failing septic systems



Illicit discharges flow, untreated, into Kentucky's streams, rivers, and lakes, resulting in poor water quality conditions. These water bodies potentially serve as local drinking water sources, habitat for wildlife, and recreational areas used for swimming, boating, and fishing. Do your part to minimize illicit discharges by:

- Maintaining vehicles properly to prevent leaks.
- Recycling used motor oil at an oil recycling center. Visit www.earth911.com to learn about local oil recycling programs in your community.
- Composting leaves, grass clippings, and other yard waste.
- Disposing of paint and other household waste products properly. Contact your County Solid Waste Coordinator for information on proper disposal methods. For contact information, visit <http://www.waste.ky.gov/branches/rla/County+Solid+Waste+Coordinators.htm>.
- Maintain your septic system properly.
- For more information on how you can make a difference at home visit http://www.stormwater.kytc.ky.gov/MCM1/mcm1_targetaudiences_citizens.html

Many communities are currently developing or have developed illicit discharge detection and elimination (IDDE) programs to address local illicit discharge issues. For information on illicit discharge detection and elimination programs in your community contact your local government officials. You may live in a permitted MS4 community. Visit this link for a list of Kentucky's MS4 communities:

http://www.stormwater.kytc.ky.gov/MCM1/mcm1_targetaudiences_schools.html#MS4.