

Unlawful Connections to the Sanitary Sewer System

The Sewer Use Ordinance prohibits and declares it unlawful to discharge any of the following into the sanitary sewer system -

- Storm water, surface or ground drainage, subsurface drainage;
- Roof runoff;
- Industrial process waters;
- Liquids or vapors having a temperature of higher than 150° Fahrenheit;
- Gasoline, benzene, naphtha, fuel oil or other flammable/explosive substance;
- Any garbage that has not been properly shredded;
- Any solid or viscous substance not meeting definition of shredded garbage;
- Waters or wastes having a ph lower than 5.5 or higher than 9.0;
- Any waters having corrosive properties;
- Waters or wastes containing toxic or poisonous substances;
- Waters or wastes containing substantial suspended solids;
- Any noxious or malodorous gas or substance which may create a nuisance;
- Water or wastes with substances not meeting industrial waste regulations.

The prohibition against discharge of “storm water, surface or ground drainage, subsurface drainage or roof drainage” means that roof gutters, downspouts, sump pump discharges and other discharges of “storm water” cannot be connected to the sanitary sewer system. Storm water does not require treatment as does sanitary sewerage.

Why Certain Connections Are Prohibited

Most of the discharges listed above involve waters, substances or gases which are or may be beyond the capacity of a sanitary sewer system.

Discharge of “storm water” into the sanitary sewer system is prohibited for many reasons that affect all of us, these including -

- No sanitary sewer system is designed or sized to accommodate storm water flows in addition to sanitary sewer flows;
- Storm water does not require wastewater or sewerage treatment;
- No municipality’s authorized capacity in the inter-municipal sanitary sewer system includes allowance for any substantial flows of storm water;
- After storm events, volumes of storm water flows substantially increase;
- Property owners paying rental to the sanitary sewer system should not have to pay for transportation and treatment of other properties’ storm water.

Unlawful Connections of Storm Water Discharge

In recent years, improvements in technology have enabled Millcreek Township and the Millcreek Township Sewer Authority to identify a serious problem - the discharge of storm water from many properties in the Township into the sanitary sewer system.

These connections typically involve roof gutters and downspouts, sump pump discharges and diversions of ground and subsurface waters.

Millcreek's regulations governing the sanitary sewer system have never allowed discharge of storm waters into the sanitary sewer system. In designing improvements to the system and determining needed capacity in the inter-municipal sanitary sewer system during the 1990's to accommodate its future growth, Millcreek Township and the Sewer Authority did not have any reason to include provision for substantial flows of storm water that should not be in the system.

Though Millcreek has always required permits to connect to the sanitary sewer system and has required that work be inspected, many Township properties have connected storm water discharge to the sanitary sewer system. This has happened in a number of ways, from plumbers deciding that connection to the sanitary sewer was easier, to a connection being made in the course of repairs or improvements to homes. In each case, the connections were made without notice to the Township and certainly with no inspector nearby.

Storm water discharge should be directed to storm sewers serving most properties in the Township, to a drainage channel, to a watercourse like a creek or into the ground where allowed.

What Unlawful Connections Mean to You

All storm water discharged into the sanitary sewer system is transported to the City of Erie's system for treatment as though it was sanitary sewerage. No sanitary sewer system is designed to convey storm water; the system would have to be far larger to do it. Within two hours after a storm, and as snow melts, the volume of storm water flowing from properties substantially increases. Storm water discharges connected to the sanitary sewer system leads to major increases in sanitary sewer flows, sometimes exceeding the system's capacity. Put simply -

- About 25% of sanitary sewer flows today are storm water
- After storm events, the percentage of storm water flows increase
- Sewer rent payers pay for transportation and treatment of storm water
- Storm water flows today are costing rate payers about \$750,000 each year
- Storm water flows contribute to exceeding allowed capacity in the system
- Exceeding allowed capacity in the City's system leads to stiff surcharges
- Exceeding actual capacity of the system can lead to backups into homes

The Township's new policy to identify and terminate unlawful connections is intended to address these issues and to reduce system costs.