

What is an illicit discharge?

An illicit discharge is the release of pollutants or non-stormwater materials to the stormwater system. Illicit discharges contribute high levels of pollutants including heavy metals, toxins, oil and grease, solvents, nutrients, viruses, and bacteria that flow directly into receiving creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes.

What is stormwater runoff?

When it rains, water can either soak into the ground, in grass and landscaped areas, or run off impervious surfaces like our streets, parking lots, sidewalks, and roofs. Stormwater runoff is the water that flows over ground surface areas, picking up any pollutants in its path as the runoff flows into our stormwater drainage system.

What makes up the stormwater drainage system?

This system is referred to as a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4).

By definition, an MS4 is a system of conveyances that includes:

- catch basins
- drop inlets
- curb inlets
- drainage ditches
- headwalls
- pipes
- outfalls

The MS4 discharges directly into creeks, streams, rivers and lakes without treatment. Stormwater conveyances also reduce localized flooding.



Illicit discharges can enter the drainage system through either direct connections or indirect inputs. Wastewater connections, whether intentional or inadvertent, should never be plumbed to the stormwater drainage system, but sent to a wastewater treatment plant where it can be treated before the water is released into the environment.

Examples of illicit discharge

- trash & litter
- motor oil & auto fluids
- cooking oil & grease
- cleaners & soaps
- wash water; mop buckets, car washing & power washing
- pool chemicals & pool discharges that are not de-chlorinated
- paint & paint remover
- yard waste; grass clippings & leaves
- pesticides
- fertilizers
- pet waste
- dumpster leakage
- construction materials; cement dust & concrete washout



Sources

- Illegal dumping of any of the examples listed above anywhere outside where the material can be picked up by runoff during storms
- Spills of any of the examples listed above
- Cracked sanitary systems or septic systems
- Mobile car washes & pressure washing services that do not collect and treat wash water before proper disposal



What to look for!



- suds, odors, or discolorations in surface waters
- deliberate dumping of substances like paint, used oil or concrete. It's rare to see someone actively dumping, but residue or staining on top or around a stormwater conveyance is a good indicator
- staining near unsecured containers stored outside, especially those without protection from weather and precipitation

How can you help?

1. **Prevent** spills when working outdoors by placing drip pans or drop cloths before you start.
2. **Cleanup** spills by dry methods, such as sweeping, or apply absorbents and then sweep them up. Avoid washing spills with water.
3. **Store** chemicals, cleaners, auto fluids, paint supplies and other similar materials indoors or under cover in leak-proof containers.
4. **Properly dispose** of unused chemicals, cleaners and other household hazardous wastes (HHWs). Check the label for care directions.
5. If you use fertilizers and pesticides, always **follow the directions** for proper application.
6. **Never** blow or rake yard waste into drainage structures including ditches or directly into waterways. Properly prepare it for collection or start a compost pile.
7. **Don't dump** your mop bucket or other wash water outside and wash equipment indoors when possible.
8. **Volunteer** with us! You can mark storm drains with "no dumping" to educate others.

HOW DO I REPORT ILLICIT DISCHARGES?



By phone for IN PROGRESS or EMERGENT issues, call the Stormwater Department at 863-402-6877.

Online reporting at highlandsfl.gov on the main page: Stormwater-Pollution reporting link.

Online reporting at highlandsfl.gov/departments/engineering/npdes_program.php.

Scan the QR Code at right from any smart device to be directed to the Stormwater-Pollution reporting link.

