

PROTECTING OUR SEWER SYSTEM

Water and wastewater services are a major factor in protecting the health of our community. The everyday simplicity of turning on a faucet or flushing a toilet can easily be taken for granted, but the assurance of clean, safe water and wastewater treatment has only been with our community for about 100 years.

Prior to the development of public drinking water systems and wastewater treatment facilities, waterborne diseases commonly caused severe illness and even death. In the mid-1800s, the United States saw repeated outbreaks of cholera, a disease that is prevalent where water and wastewater treatment is not available. Delivering clean, safe water and maintaining our community's sanitation is a responsibility the City of Cedar Rapids takes very seriously.

We ask for your help to make sure our sanitary sewer system effectively removes wastewater away from your property. This pamphlet has helpful information on how you can help us protect our sanitary sewer system, reducing basement back-ups and sewer overflows.



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Protecting our Sewer System:

Disconnecting Downspouts

WHERE DOES YOUR DOWNSPOUT GO?

Downspouts play an important role during storms transporting the rain that falls on your roof away from your foundation. However, some downspouts deliver that rain directly into the sanitary sewer system, which can quickly overwhelm the capacity of the sanitary sewer system resulting in basement back-ups, sewer overflows and straining the capacity of our Water Pollution Control Facility.

Making sure your downspout does not add rain water to our sanitary sewer system is just one action homeowners can take to preserve our precious water resources and protect the health of our community.

If your downspout disappears underground, it could be sending all the rain water from your roof into the sanitary sewer system. A single roof can send 12 gallons of rain water per minute to the sewer system during a heavy storm.

Correcting this problem is easy. Follow the directions in this pamphlet to help make a difference in our sanitary sewer system.

SANITARY OR STORM SEWER?

In Cedar Rapids we have two separate sewer systems. The sanitary sewer system takes wastewater generated in your home to the Water Pollution Control Facility for treatment before sending it back to the Cedar River.

The storm sewer system collects rain water that falls in the city and conveys that water directly to our streams and the Cedar River. It is important to protect the quality of our stormwater by keeping litter, chemicals, oil and pet waste out of the street.

HOW TO DISCONNECT YOUR DOWNSPOUT



Step 1: Measure about 9 inches from where the downspout enters the ground.



Step 2: Cut the downspout with a hacksaw at the measured height.



Step 3: Cap the pipe going into the ground. In most cases, you can use a simple rubber cap secured with a hose clamp. You can also use a wing-nut test plug.



Step 4: Insert the downspout INTO the elbow (if you put the elbow into the downspout, it will leak). Secure with metal sheet screws. You may need to crimp the downspout with a pair of pliers to get a good fit.



Step 5: Attach a downspout pipe extension to carry the water away from the house and foundation. Be sure to insert the elbow into the extension to prevent leaks and secure with sheet metal screws.

UTILIZING STORMWATER

Stormwater provides a free, high-quality resource for your lawn and garden. Here are a few options to effectively utilize this resource:

RAIN BARREL

A rain barrel collects water and stores it for when you need to most – during dry periods – to water plants, wash your car, or to top off a swimming pool. It provides an ample supply of free water to homeowners and does not contain chlorine, lime or calcium, making it ideal for gardens and flowers.

Ready-made rain barrels can be purchased from any local hardware or garden supply store. You can also make your own rain barrel with a 55-gallon drum, vinyl hose, PVC couplings and a screen gate.

RAIN GARDEN

Rain gardens are a proven way to prevent flooding, reduce water pollution and beautify your yard. Rain gardens absorb water from your roof drain instead of sending it to the storm sewer system. Spongy soil is the secret to a successful rain garden. Many rain gardens also feature native plants, whose roots extend deep into the ground to absorb water.

SOIL QUALITY RESTORATION

Lawns with poor, compacted soil contribute to water quality problems due to their inability to infiltrate and absorb water. Aerating your lawn with a plug or deep-tine aerator and following with an application of ¼ to ¾ inch of compost can help restore the quality of your soil. The compost helps fill the plugs with good organic matter and improve infiltration.

