Stormwater Pollution Prevention in Dry Weather

Q. Is stormwater pollution prevention necessary when there’s a draught?

A. Stormwater runoff is one of the leading causes of water pollution in the United States—even in draught conditions. While some items that end up in gutters, storm drains and stormwater are easily visible such as trash, litter and pet waste, other pollutants may not be visible but are far more harmful, such as oil and grease, dissolved metals like lead and copper, and unnatural amounts of sediment from oily driveways, constructions sites, and roadways that are accumulating on the dry ground. When it does eventually rain (or snow), these pollutants are washed down the storm drains and directly into our waterways.

It’s important to note that not all water is treated equally. Cities in Salt Lake County have two separate water collection systems. The sanitary sewer system collects wastewater from sinks, toilets, showers and washing machines that is transported through pipes and flows to treatment plants. Whereas storm drains carry water that remains untreated, directly into washes, parks and rivers. While both systems have extensive infrastructure, the stormwater system that includes everything from ditches and culverts, ponds and lakes, curbs and gutters, to wetlands and rain gardens, are not part of a treatment process at any point. This is why it is vital that we all do our part to protect our water and our environment by remembering “We all live downstream.”

We can all work together to keep our stormwater free of contaminants including the following:

**Pet waste**  
Collect pet waste in a plastic bag and throw it away in a garbage can. Pet waste contains bacteria and other pathogens that are not healthy additives to our water.

**Automobile Oils and Fluids**  
Properly maintain vehicles to prevent fluid leaks. Use drip pans to catch leaks. Clean up leaks and spills using an absorbent such as kitty litter or sand. Sweep up immediately and properly dispose. *One quart of motor oil can contaminate over 250,000 gallons of water.*

**Vehicle Washing**  
Use a commercial or self-service car wash if possible – it is actually more water efficient. If you do choose to wash your vehicle at home, make sure you use a bucket and phosphate-free, biodegradable detergent. Direct wash water to landscaping, when possible. Dispose of wash water into a sink or toilet.

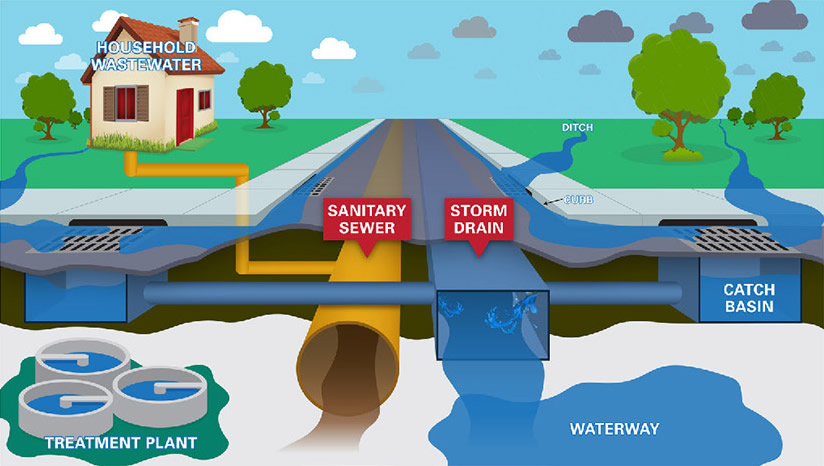
**Lawn Care**  
Use pesticides, fertilizers and other lawn care products sparingly and in accordance with label instructions. Over watering can carry pollutants to rivers and washes. Do not sweep or wash yard debris into the street. Debris can clog storm drain inlets causing flooding.

**Household Chemicals**  
Keep chemicals in labeled, closed containers. Unused household chemicals, including paint, used oil, cleaners, and yard chemicals should be properly disposed or recycled. Take these items to a Household Hazardous Waste site or collection event.

**Trash & Recycling**  
Pick up any trash that has been dropped or blown into your yard, driveway or gutter. Bag and tie loose trash. Keep trash and recycling bins closed.

**Spill Management Tip:**  
Keep absorbents, such as kitty litter, sand or old rags on hand for cleaning up spills. Absorb spills and immediately sweep into a trash bag and dispose in the garbage.

The practice of these healthy household habits by all of us can keep common pollutants off the ground and out of our stormwater. In the end, clean stormwater is a community effort that begins long before it rains.



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