

STORMWATER FACT SHEET

WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?

Stormwater runoff is precipitation that falls to the ground and comes in contact with soils, greases, debris, and other contaminants from areas such as roadways, parking lots, and rooftops. It eventually flows to a storm drain, which enters an underground storm sewer system that discharges into local waterways such as rivers, streams, creeks, and lakes.

WHY IS STORMWATER RUNOFF A CONCERN?

Stormwater runoff is one of the leading causes of water quality problems. Stormwater carries debris and pollutants directly into our water sources, which can endanger the lives of humans, animals, and plant life. Managing stormwater runoff helps eliminate and/or reduce these negative impacts.

Report a spill into
a storm drain by
calling the Iowa
State Stormwater
Hotline at
(515) 294-7229

WHAT IS MS4?

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) are a collective network of structures operated by a public entity, such as a city or university, managed under a single permit. The determination of which cities and universities are required to obtain individual MS4 permits involves a combination of population, proximity to large, urbanized areas, and the water quality of receiving streams. According to the Iowa DNR, MS4 permits require permittees to implement measures to:

- Reduce pollutants in stormwater from illicit discharges and construction sites.
- Provide public education.
- Allow for public participation.
- Minimize pollutants from municipal operations.
- Address post-construction runoff.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP REDUCE RUNOFF?

There are a wide variety of ways a person may contribute to keeping our waterways clean. The Iowa Stormwater Education Partnership recommends two main strategies: Choose to Prevent and Choose to Reduce.

Prevent

- Don't be a litterbug. Throw trash away in the proper receptacle.
- Turn your grass clippings into mulch to prevent debris in the street. Sweep up any clippings in the street or driveway. If you bag your clippings, consider turning them into compost.
- Always research before fertilizing your yard. The same goes for pesticide and herbicide application. Use only what's necessary!
- Recycle any unwanted hazardous materials (pesticides, paints, cleaners, etc.) at your local landfill or Regional Household Hazardous Material Collection Center.

Reduce

- Point downspouts toward grassy area rather than street curb.
- Start a rain barrel under your downspouts to collect rainwater. This saves on the water you may already use to water plants or gardens.
- Install rain gardens, which are small gardens in depressed areas meant to catch stormwater runoff. Pick plants that don't mind spending a short amount of time in a little water.