

THE RULES

SANITARY SEWER (or septic system)

A Sanitary Sewer System: transports wastewater and sewage from homes and buildings to a treatment plant.

All bath and kitchen drains in your house should be connected to the sanitary sewer or your septic system. This allows your wastewater to be properly treated before it is returned to the local waterway.

Your clothes washing machine drain should be connected to the sanitary sewer or your septic system. Do not direct it into your basement sump pump! Soap and bleach can harm your garden and the local waterways when the water is discharged.

STORM SEWER (or ditch)

A Storm Sewer System: a system of sewers and ditches that transports all runoff from rain and snow to local rivers, streams, and ditches.

Make rainwater work for you by redirecting your downspouts to your lawn or garden instead of into the sanitary sewer or septic system. Directing your downspouts into rain barrels is also a good alternative that can provide free water for your garden – saving you money.

EXCEPTIONS TO EVERY RULE. . .

Your basement sump pump should be discharging into your yard, garden, ditch or storm sewer – EXCEPT when your clothes washing machine is directed into your sump. If your washing machine is connected to your sump, then the washing machine should be re-directed into the sanitary sewer or your septic system. If it is not possible to re-direct your washing machine, then your sump should be discharging into the sanitary sewer or septic system, since soap and bleach can harm your yard, garden or local waterway.

Your garage floor drain should be directed to the sanitary sewer system, NEVER into a septic system or storm drain. If you have a septic system, you should plug and not use the floor drain in your garage. Garage drains usually carry motor oil, automotive fluids, road salt, and cleaners, which can be very harmful to your septic system and

TIP CARD NO. 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DRAINS, STORM AND SANITARY SEWERS, AND DITCHES:

Toledo-Lucas County Health Department 419-213-4018
Wood County Health Department 419-352-8402
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency 419-352-8461

Add up all the land that drains into the same waterway, and you have a watershed. Understanding how we impact our watershed is the first step toward protecting water quality.

HOW DO POLLUTANTS GET INTO THE RIVER SYSTEM? UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS TOO EASY!

Water from rainfall, snowmelt, and sprinklers moves over land to the nearest storm drain, ditch or creek. Pollutants “hitch a ride” on this water that is running off. From there, the polluted water enters area waterways like Swan Creek, Ottawa River, and the Maumee River, unfiltered and untreated. This runoff can cause a decline in water quality, harming the creatures living in and around the waterway. Contamination of surface and ground water also places our drinking water supplies at risk.

TAKE ACTION! YOU CAN PROTECT WATER QUALITY. IT'S EASY. . .

- Pick a few of the simple steps recommended in this brochure. Try them for a few months. Remember, a few simple changes can make a big difference.
- Share this tip card with a friend or neighbor.
- Get involved in local environmental activities as a member or a volunteer. The Maumee RAP has been working to improve and protect our area waterways for over 20 years. To learn how you can support their efforts or get involved, visit PartnersForCleanStreams.org

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Give Water a Hand is a cooperative education effort among Partners for Clean Streams (now supporting the Maumee RAP) and the following: Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (419-241-9155)

Lucas County (419-213-4500)
City of Oregon (419-698-7047)
Village of Holland (419-865-7104)
Village of Ottawa Hills (419-536-1111)
Village of Whitehouse (419-877-5383)
Township of Monclova (419-865-7862)
Township of Springfield (419-865-0239)
Township of Washington (419-726-6621)
Ohio Environmental Education Fund
Ohio Department of Natural Resources



City of Northwood (419-693-9327)
Village of Haskins (419-823-1911)
Village of Millbury (419-836-9671)
Village of Waterville (419-878-8100)
Township of Jerusalem (419-836-8921)
Township of Spencer (419-865-2883)
Township of Sylvania (419-882-0031)
Township of Waterville (419-878-5176)
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
United States Fish & Wildlife Service
Keep for future reference or recycle.

Partners for Clean Streams | P.O. Box 203 | Perrysburg, Ohio 43552 | Phone: 419-874-0727 | PartnersForCleanStreams.org

you need to
PUMP
it out...

for the love of scum. . .

Find out how to properly care for your septic system, drains, and downspouts. It could save you time and money, while protecting our waterways.



WHERE DO YOUR DRAINS GO? ARE THEY GOING WHERE THEY SHOULD?

**A FEW SIMPLE CHANGES IN YOUR
DISPOSAL PRACTICES WILL SAVE
YOU TIME AND MONEY, WHILE
PROTECTING OUR WATERWAYS. . .**

It can be tricky to keep track of which drains should go where, but here is a quick rule of thumb. Drains inside your house should discharge to a sanitary sewer or septic system. Drains outside your house* should discharge to a storm sewer, ditch, yard, or garden. But remember, there are exceptions to every rule!

Take a look at the rules to see if you could be saving money, while protecting our waterways.

*including those inside your house that are moving materials from outside (i.e. rainwater being discharged by a basement sump pump)

DON'T KNOW IF YOU HAVE A SEPTIC SYSTEM OR ARE CONNECTED TO A SANITARY SEWER?

Contact your local health department to find out! If you do have a septic system, here are a few additional tips you can do to make a difference.

- Inspect and pump septic tanks every 2 to 3 years. Use a registered septic tank contractor. Keep a record of your septic system inspections, repairs, pump-outs or other system maintenance. If you move, leave this record with the new homeowner.
- Septic systems and sanitary sewers are designed only for the disposal of toilet wastes, tissues, soaps, and water used from bathing, laundry, and dishwashing. Disposing of improper solids in your septic system can cause clogging and failure because the system cannot break down the material. Dispose of such items as cigarette butts, coffee grounds, tampons, and household grease (fats, cooking oil, butter, margarine, etc.) in your household trash can.
- To keep your septic system functioning properly, avoid flooding the leach field with excess water. Do not drain your hot tub or pool through your septic system. Conserve water inside your home and spread out water-intensive activities like bathing, dishwashing, and laundry.
- Know the location of your septic system and never park, drive or build on it. Even sheds, driveways, above-ground pools, and decks built over the leach field or septic tank can compact soil, break pipes, and prevent oxygen from getting into the soil, which the bacteria need to break down and treat sewage.
- Check for signs of failure each summer by looking for areas in your lawn that remain moist during dry times. Check for excess grass or plant growth. If you live near a river, creek, or ditch, check for excess plant and algae growth along the shoreline. If you see signs of failure, schedule an inspection and necessary repairs immediately.

WHY BOTHER?

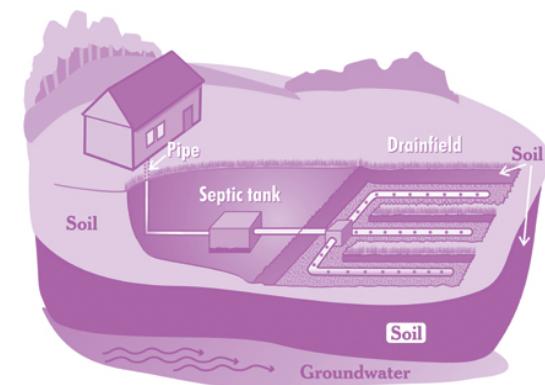
Failed septic systems are very expensive to fix and can be significant sources of surface and ground water contamination. They can contaminate nearby wells with nitrates; a serious health threat to infants and some adults. Improperly functioning septic systems in our area have also been blamed for unsafe bacteria levels at Lake Erie beaches. Remember that in the best soil conditions with the best maintenance schedule, home sewage systems are only designed to last 25 years. Poorly installed or maintained systems can fail in less than one year.

HOME SEWAGE SYSTEMS 101

A home septic system includes:

A septic tank which allows solids to settle and separate.

A leach field made of alternating beds of perforated pipe, designed to allow liquid from the septic tank to infiltrate the soil.



Some facts and information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Huron River Watershed Council.