

Foreign Language? Illicit Discharge

Have you ever heard the term illicit discharge? For many of us 'illicit discharge' may seem like a phrase from a foreign language. However, an illicit discharge is an English term that we should all know about because it affects our lives.

An illicit discharge is the release of untreated wastewater into our waters via a storm drain or direct wash off into ditches, rivers, lakes, and streams. In other words, any waste that gets into our water.

What is considered an illicit discharge?

- Dumping chemicals into a storm drain
- Dumping of oil into a drain or onto the ground
- Leaking septic systems
- Unauthorized commercial or industrial discharges down drains or directly into a waterway



Dumping oil and other chemicals is illegal as it damages the environment and thus affects our lives. Many people believe that storm drains lead to a wastewater treatment plant. This is not usually the case! When pollutants get into storm drains, they will most likely end up in a lake, river, or a stream. Consequently, the untreated water can poison fish, birds, and other wildlife. Even human health is at risk because our drinking water can become contaminated or communicable diseases may be contracted from contact with polluted water.

Do you want your children to enjoy pure drinking water, lakes full of fish and other wildlife, along with swimming, fishing, and boating? **Then remember, only rain down the drain!**

For more information on watersheds in southwest Michigan visit www.swmpc.org/water.asp.