



The Herald-Palladium

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TOP STORY

Berrien residents asked to 'Keep it Blue' by recycling

By JOHN MATUSZAK - HP Staff Writer Jan 11, 2019 Updated Jan 11, 2019

ST. JOSEPH — In the wake of an illegal diesel fuel dump into a storm drain in Bainbridge Township, Berrien County officials want residents to keep hazardous materials out of the sewers, and to know there is a proper way to dispose of these types of materials.

The Berrien County Drain Commissioner's office reminds residents that storm water, or rain water, flows into the storm drains at street corners, or into roadside ditches.

Unlike the water that flows down the drains inside your home, which goes to sewage treatment facilities, the storm drain system is completely separate; water in the storm drain receives no treatment or filtering process. This means that any pollution that gets washed into the storm drains go directly to creeks, rivers, bayous and ultimately Lake Michigan.

Dumping of waste or materials or the release of pollution into a storm drain or waterway is called an illicit discharge. An illicit discharge can be any of the following situations:

- Dumping of chemicals into a storm drain.
- Dumping of oil or fuel into a storm drain or onto the ground.
- Leaking septic systems.
- Discharging unauthorized commercial or industrial wastes or materials down drains or directly into a waterway.
- Discharging untreated wastewater from a sewage treatment plant or conveyance system into waterways.

Consequently, the pollution or untreated water flowing into our waterways can poison fish, birds and other wildlife. Even human health is at risk because drinking water can become contaminated or communicable diseases may be contracted from contact with polluted water.

Report any type of water pollution, spill and environmental emergency by calling the Pollution Emergency Alerting System (PEAS) Hotline at 1-800-292-4706. For immediate and obvious threats to public health/safety, call 911.

Activities that should be reported include: wetland filling or other destructive activities; contamination to lakes, rivers and streams; large numbers of dead fish; suspicious discharge from pipes; pollution entering a storm drain or surface water; suspicious dumping to drains and surface waters; construction site soil erosion entering surface waters; sewage discharges on the ground or into surface waters; polluted storm water run-off from storage piles or dumpsters; illegal connections to sanitary sewers or storm drains or surface waters.

Be cautious about what washes off your property and contact the PEAS hotline if you detect any illicit discharge in your area. They are illegal and can directly affect you.

For more information on ways to improve water quality, report pollution and ways to properly dispose of materials and recycle in Southwest Michigan, visit www.letskeepitblue.org

Jill Adams, environmental property manager for the county Parks Department says that many of the area auto parts stores and some auto body shops will accept used motor oil from residents for recycling. She encourages people to contact their local store or shop directly to find out what services they offer. This service has always been free up to this point, and customers should check with individual stores.

The Southeast Berrien County Landfill Recycle Center, 3200 Chamberlain Road, Buchanan, 269-695-2500, accepts used motor oil, oil filters, transmission fluid and antifreeze from residents. The Recycle Center is open six days per week and service is free.

The county-coordinated household chemical collections accept motor oil, filters, antifreeze, diesel fuel and other auto liquids from Berrien County residents. The county offers six free collections per year, starting in April and running through October.

The Kalamazoo County Household Hazardous Waste Center is open year around to Berrien County residents to use for free. This center accepts any auto type liquid from residents. Any Berrien County resident utilizing this center in Kalamazoo must show an ID with an address in order to use the services. More information is listed at www.kalcounty.com/hhw.

The programs listed above are for residential use, Adams said, and there are a number of companies that provide the proper recycling and disposal of oils, fuels and auto liquids to businesses.

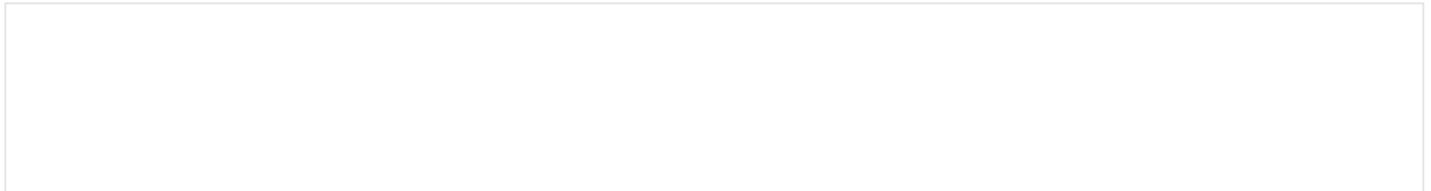
Information is at www.berriencounty.org/462/Recycling-Services.

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