The City of Victoria
Department of Public Works
Storm Water Management Program
Frequently Asked Questions

As required by the Clean Water Act, the City of Victoria has an active Storm Water Management Program. Part of this program is aimed at educating the citizens of Victoria in regards to storm water and the City's storm drain system. The following list of frequently asked questions has been developed to help the general public better understand the City's storm drain system and why it is important to keep pollutants out of it.

Q: What is storm water?
A: Storm water is defined as water from rains or melting snow and ice that flows across the ground and paved surfaces. Storm water runoff is of concern because of the pollutants it may carry.

Q: Where does the storm water go after it enters the storm drain?
A: Storm water that does not seep into the ground will flow down driveways and streets into gutters. The gutters drain into a system of underground pipes known as a storm drain system. This system leads directly to the City's creek outfalls and eventually to the Guadalupe River or other watersheds.

Q: What is the purpose of the storm drain system?
A: The purpose of the storm drain system is to transport storm water from streets and highways quickly and efficiently to our creeks and rivers.

Q: What's the difference between putting water down the storm drain and putting water down the toilet or sink?
A: The sanitary sewer system (toilets and sinks) and the storm drain system are two completely different systems. The water that goes down sinks or toilets in homes or businesses flows to a wastewater treatment plant, where it is treated before it is released into the Guadalupe River. Water that flows down driveways and streets into the gutter goes into a storm drain that flows directly into the City's outfalls and eventually to the Guadalupe River or other watersheds. This water does not receive any treatment prior to release.

Q: What are common contributors to Storm Water Pollution?
A: The main contributor to storm water pollution is sediment. Sediment comes from exposed ground without vegetation. This is a common problem around construction sites and roadways. Practices should be put in place so that no dirt reaches the sidewalks, streets, gutters and storm drains. Oil, antifreeze, detergents, pesticides and yard debris are additional pollutants that are washed into the storm drains from driveways, backyards, parking lots and streets by rain. The pollutants are then deposited into our waterways.

Q: Why shouldn't yard trimmings and soil go into the storm drain? Doesn't rain wash the same kind of material into the creeks and rivers anyway?
A: When natural materials, such as yard trimmings, break down, oxygen is drawn from the water. In a natural setting the amount of this debris would be limited to the leaves of those plants and trees bordering the creeks and rivers. However, in our urban setting, yard trimmings, leaves and dirt on paved areas throughout the entire City are washed into storm drain system which leads to our waterways. A large amount of organic debris can ruin the natural balance of our creeks and rivers.

In addition, pesticides, vehicle fluids, and other pollutants leaked onto roads and driveways are scoured from all the paved surfaces throughout the City and washed directly into the creeks and rivers.

Q: Why isn't storm water treated before it goes into a creek or river?
A: Each storm drain goes to the nearest creek or outfall. As a result, storm water is not collected into one location where it can be treated. Instead, it flows through separate pipe systems, each emptying into the nearest outfall. Preventing pollution at the source is a much more effective and less costly way to prevent storm water pollution.

Q: What can I put down the storm drain?
A: Local ordinances prohibit anything other than uncontaminated rainwater from entering the storm drain system. Never pour anything into a gutter, street or storm drain.

Q: What do I do if I see someone dumping something into a storm drain?
A: Call (361) 485-3186 to report illegal discharges into the storm sewer system.