

What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the land. Hard surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from naturally soaking into the ground.

Why is stormwater runoff a problem?

Stormwater picks up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants from surfaces. It carries them into a storm sewer system or directly to a lake, stream, river, wetland, or coastal water. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water. The excess runoff from impervious areas can also contribute to flooding problems.

With over 750,000 people living in Northwest Indiana, we all need to be aware of what goes in our storm drains. Remember, only rain in the drain!



Remember only
rain in the Drain...

Brought to you by the Northwest Indiana
MS4 Community Partnership

For More Information Contact:
Northwestern Indiana Regional
Planning Commission
(219) 763-6060 www.nirpc.org

Who should I contact if I have hazardous waste?

Household hazardous wastes, like insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil, and other auto fluids can poison aquatic life. The Lake Michigan District holds regular waste collections throughout Northwestern Indiana. To find out their schedule simply call your local district.

In Lake County call: 1-800-946-4449
In Porter County call: 1-219-465-3694
In LaPorte County call: 1-219-326-1425

Who is the Northwest Indiana MS4 Community Partnership?

Member Communities of the MS4 Partnership are:

Lake County Surveyor	New Chicago
Cedar Lake	Schererville
Crown Point	St. John
Dyer	Porter County Surveyor
East Chicago	Chesterton
Gary	Portage
Griffith	Porter
Highland	Valparaiso
Hobart	Nature Works CD
Lake Station	Twin Lakes CD
Merrillville	Valparaiso Lakes Area CD
Munster	

Go to learn more at:
www.nirpc.org/environment/water



NORTHWEST
INDIANA
MS4
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP



1. Use Chemicals
With Care

2. Use Water Where
it Lands

3. Use the Can,
Not the Land

4. Use Water
Wisely



Four Simple Steps to Clean water

Use Chemicals with Care



They don't belong out there!

Antifreeze, household cleaners, gasoline, pesticides, oil paints, solvents, and motor oil are just some of the common household products that can pollute water if they enter storm drains. Just 4 quarts of oil down a storm drain can form an oil slick the size of 8 football fields in a lake or wetland.

- *Do not put chemicals in the trash, down the storm drain, or on the ground.*
- *Take leftover chemicals to a local hazardous waste center or collection day.*
- *If something does spill, use dry material to absorb it, then sweep it up!*

There are over 500,000 cars in Northwest Indiana, so even small leaks matter.

- *Keep your car tuned and fix leaks promptly.*
- *Take your car to the car wash or wash your car on the grass. Your lawn will gladly soak up the excess water.*

Fertilizer is also a chemical. The phosphorus in many fertilizers can easily overwhelm the natural balance, causing harmful algae blooms. With 250,000 homes in Northwest Indiana, all of us need to be aware of the cumulative effects.

What can you do? Simple.

- *Use fertilizer without phosphorus.*
- *Select a slow-release fertilizer where at least half of the nitrogen is "water insoluble"*
- *Keep fertilizer away from waterways*

Use Water Where It Lands

Why Let It Run Away?



Water is one of the few valuable natural resources that actually falls free from the sky. Yet we often harden our landscapes to encourage it to run off as quickly as possible. Then we pay for new water from the hose! Use your landscaping and yard management to take advantage of rainfall.

- *Mulch around trees and plants. Choose plants native to Indiana. Once established, these plants tolerate dry weather and resist disease.*
- *Plant a Rain Garden to help protect the water quality and reuse run off.*
- *For more information: <http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/nativeplants/pub-resor.PDF>*

Use the Can, Not the Land



Stuff on the Ground, ends up in the Water

Pet waste contains bacteria that are harmful to our water and to us. Leaving it on the sidewalk or lawn means harmful bacteria can runoff into the our lakes and streams. Pick up after our pets to be a good neighbor and keep our water clean.

Debris, such as plastic bags, six-pack rings, bottles, and cigarette butts, washed into water bodies can choke, suffocate, or disable aquatic life like ducks, fish, turtles, and birds.

Yard waste such as grass clippings and leaves can cause harm in streams and lakes. Although they are natural materials, too much of a good thing creates problems. Grass, leaves, and sediment can bury important habitat. When it decays, it can suck all of the oxygen out of the water.

So, what can you do to help? Simple.

- *Dispose of your pet's waste in the trash, or toilet, Don't litter, pickup trash you do find*
- *Compost your yard waste or contact your solid waste district for disposal options in your area.*



Use Water Wisely It Doesn't Grow on Trees

Did you know that individually we use about 77 gallons of water each day? Although rain does fall from the sky, no new water is growing! Treating and cleaning water both before and after we use it also takes a lot of chemicals and energy.

- *Consider using a broom instead of a hose to clean sidewalks and driveways.*
- *Direct hoses and sprinklers on the lawn, not the driveway. Remember, saving water also saves you money.*
- *Water your lawn only when it needs it.*

We might not be able to see the lake or stream from our window, but it's there. It might be a small stream or storm drain in the street. All of these lead to our lakes and streams. So, what we do at home affects our rivers and lakes!