



CITY OF MARINE CITY

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ILLICIT CONNECTIONS

What is a sanitary sewer?

A sanitary sewer is a pipe located in the City right-of-way that is designed solely to transport wastewater from sanitary fixtures (i.e. toilets, showers, etc.) in your house or place of business to the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant. It is the homeowner and business owner's responsibility to maintain sanitary sewer lines from the home or building to the City main.

What is a storm sewer?

A storm sewer is a pipe located in the City right-of-way that is designed to carry storm related water runoff. Storm sewers are normally much larger than sanitary sewers because they are designed to carry much larger amounts of flow. Storm sewers are owned, operated and maintained by the City of Marine City.

What is an illicit connection?

An illicit connection is a connection that permits extraneous storm related water (water from sources other than sanitary fixtures) to enter the sanitary sewer system. The extraneous storm related water is water that should be going to the storm sewer or allowed to soak into the ground without entering the sanitary sewer.

What are the different types of illicit connections?

Illicit connections include connections of roof downspouts, sump pumps, footing/foundation drains and basement drains to the house sanitary sewer lines.

Where should storm drainage from downspouts, sump pump and/or other drain apparatuses be directed if it cannot discharge to the sanitary sewer?

Generally, sump pump, area drains and the like are to be diverted to the storm sewers, front or back yards or above ground drainage ditches. All diversions must follow City Code and Ordinances. Contact the Building Official with any questions regarding City Code and Ordinances at (810) 765-9011.

Why is it important for everyone to remove illicit connections?

Removal of illicit connections will significantly reduce the flow of extraneous storm related water in the sanitary sewer system. This storm water ends up at the wastewater treatment plant and is treated along with sanitary flow. If the City and its residents can reduce the amount of storm water in the treatment plant, the costs of operating the plant can be significantly reduced.

How can surcharged sanitary sewers cause basement flooding?

A surcharged sewer flows at a level greater than the “normal” level. If the home has sanitary fixtures or floor drains at an elevation below the surcharge level, basement flooding can occur. The sanitary sewers have been designed to transfer sanitary waste only. Extraneous storm water flow added to the normal sanitary flow can exceed the capacity of the sanitary sewer resulting in a situation where the sanitary sewer is “surcharged”. Surcharging occurs when the amount of flow trying to get through a pipe exceeds the maximum capacity of the pipe thus building up pressure in the pipe. When pressure builds up it seeks to relieve itself through any means possible, one of which is by backing up private sanitary services and filling basements and crawlspaces. Reducing the extraneous flow will reduce the surcharging and sewer back-ups.

Do illicit connections really contribute large amounts of extraneous water to the sanitary sewer system?

Yes. For example, a typical eight-inch sanitary sewer can handle domestic sewage from up to approximately 225 homes; however, it takes only five sump pumps operating at full capacity to overload an eight-inch sanitary sewer.

I've never had basement flooding due surcharge sewer. Why should I remove my illicit connections?

You may not have basement flooding due to surcharged sewers, but if your plumbing pumps or drains storm related water into the sanitary sewer, it may well be the cause of flooding in your neighbor's basement.

How does the City enforce illicit connections?

In 2013, the City adopted an illicit discharge elimination Ordinance that enforces the correction of any illicit discharge into the City storm sewers. For the full ordinance and more information, please visit the City website at www.cityofmarinecity.org to view *Chapter 53: Illicit Discharge Elimination* of the City's Code & Ordinances.