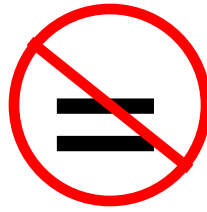


# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SANITARY SEWER AND A STORM SEWER?



**STORM SEWER**



**SANITARY SEWER**

It is important to understand the difference between a sanitary sewer and a storm sewer so we can prevent damage to our environment.

The “**sanitary sewer**” is a system of underground pipes that carry sewage from bathrooms, sinks, kitchens and other plumbing inside your home/business to a wastewater treatment plant where it is filtered, treated and discharged.

The “**storm sewer**” (aka storm drain) is a system of underground pipes or open ditches designed to carry rainfall runoff and other drainage. It is not designed to carry sewage or other hazardous waste. The runoff then discharges **untreated** into local streams, rivers and other surface water bodies such as the bay or ocean. Storm drain inlets are typically found in curbs and low-lying outdoor areas. Some older buildings have basement floor drains that connect to the storm sewer system.

Disposal of chemicals or other hazardous waste to the storm sewer damages the environment. Motor oil, cleaners, paints and other common household items that get into the storm drains can poison fish, birds and other wildlife and can find their way into drinking water supplies. Grass clippings, leaves, litter and other refuse can clog storm drains and cause flooding.

Some things you can do to help maintain our sewer systems and keep our environment clean are:

- Don't pour anything into the storm sewer drains
- Keep storm sewer drains clear of leaves, grass clippings, sticks & litter
- Repair any leaks and drips from your vehicle
- Collect and recycle motor oil
- Clean up spills and don't wash them into the storm sewer
- Don't pour paint, solvents, cleaners, etc. into any drain (inside or outside your home) – take it to your local county hazardous waste collection
- Minimize the use of herbicides and pesticides

Keeping the environment clean is crucial to our health and economy. Clean waterways provide recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat and add beauty to our landscape.

For easy steps on protecting our waterways you can visit [www.mywatersheds.org](http://www.mywatersheds.org).