

Stormwater Regulations in University Heights

Stormwater management is often primarily focused on managing the **quantity** of stormwater generated during storm events. To provide drainage, street intakes and storm sewer pipes are designed to convey stormwater to the local waterways (i.e., streams, ditches, rivers, and lakes) in order to minimize water from ponding on streets and yards.

To comply with federal regulations, University Heights implements a stormwater management program which also takes into consideration the **quality** of stormwater runoff by using practices that reduce the discharge of pollutants often found in stormwater. The program is designed to protect water quality and satisfy the appropriate requirements of the Clean Water Act.

What Is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, roofs, sidewalks, compacted ground and streets prevent stormwater runoff from naturally soaking into the ground. Stormwater runoff is collected and conveyed through storm sewers or over the ground surface directly into streams, ditches, rivers and lakes without being treated (cleaned).

What is the issue?

Pollutants accumulate on impervious surfaces between rainfall events. Stormwater can pick up trash, chemicals, oils, dirt, and other pollutants and flow into a storm sewer system or directly into a local waterway. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the water bodies we use for swimming, fishing and providing drinking water. Polluted stormwater runoff negatively impacts water quality.

- **Sediment from construction sites, or salt and sand from snow and ice removal** can cloud water and make it difficult for aquatic plants to grow. It can also destroy aquatic habitats.
- **Trash 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.
- **Household hazardous wastes like insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil, and other auto fluids** can poison aquatic life. Animals and people can become sick from eating diseased fish and shellfish or ingesting polluted water.
- **Bacteria from pet waste and other pathogens** can wash into swimming areas and create health hazards or contribute to beach closures.
 - Polluted stormwater can affect drinking water sources. This, in turn, can affect human health and increase drinking water treatment costs.
- **Topsoil compaction and loss from residential or commercial construction** contributes to increases in peak flow rates of stormwater runoff by reducing the amount of rainfall that can soak into the ground. Instead, that water runs directly off lawn areas and into storm sewer pipes or overland flow routes.
 - The Iowa DNR (Department of Natural Resources) requires that soil compaction be minimized, and existing topsoil be preserved on all construction sites, including residential building sites that result in the disturbance of one or more acres of total land area.

What is involved with the Stormwater Management Program?

University Heights maintains a [current map of the city's storm sewer system](#), provides storm drain marking ("No Dumping, Drains to River"), annual street sweeping (to remove sediment from city streets), and has passed three ordinances ([153](#), [155](#), and [169](#)) that protect stormwater quality.

Additional requirements include:

- Providing public education and outreach.
- Providing opportunities for citizens to participate in program development.
- Inspecting storm drain outlets to detect illicit discharges.
- Reducing sediment loss from construction sites.
- Establishing municipal procedures to maintain stormwater quality.

What can you do?

- **Do not litter.** Trash left along our roadways and in our city washes into our waterways through rain and melting snow. Beyond being an eyesore and a danger to wildlife, debris can allow standing water to breed disease-carrying mosquitos. It can also block storm drains, preventing water from draining properly.
- **Clean up after your pets.** Pet waste can be a major source of bacteria and excess nutrients in local waters. When walking your pet, remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local water bodies.
- **Dispose of household hazardous waste properly.** Never dump household hazardous waste such as pesticides, fertilizers, paint or solvents into a storm drain, open waterway or ditch. Beyond posing a threat to our health and environment, such dumping is illegal. For proper household hazardous waste disposal information, call the Iowa City Landfill & Recycling Center at 356-5185, or [view their information and services guide](#).
- **Report potentially hazardous spills or dumping.** If you see a potentially hazardous material flowing to a storm sewer, ditch or waterway, immediately call 356-6800 to report this activity.
- **Lawn care and yard waste:**
 - Use fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide products sparingly. Follow the instructions carefully and apply only the recommended amount. Check the weather forecast and related instructions to avoid having to repeat the application.
 - Plant trees and shrubs – the roots hold water in the ground, slowing runoff and soil erosion. Trees can lower air conditioning costs, too.
 - Re-direct roof drains to gardens or other vegetated areas.
 - Do not mow or blow grass clippings, leaves, or other lawn debris onto city streets, the curb/gutter area, or sidewalks. If you use a commercial lawn care service, be sure they understand this.
 - [Dispose of yard waste properly](#). Consider composting or mulching yard waste.

Learn More

[Stormwater Program Overview \(EPA\)](#)

<https://www.epa.gov/npdes/npdes-stormwater-program>

[Stormwater in Iowa \(ISWEP\)](#)

<https://iowastormwater.org/>

[Tips for Homeowners \(EPA\)\(PDF\)](#)

http://www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/solution_to_pollution.pdf

[Stormwater Runoff Info \(EPA\)\(PDF\)](#)

http://www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/after_the_storm.pdf

[Water Efficient Landscaping \(EPA\)\(PDF\)](#)

<http://www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/waterefficiency.pdf>