



THE MAIN DRAIN

STORMWATER NEWS YOU CAN USE

A Publication of the Portsmouth Department of Public Utilities/Public Works -
Division of Stormwater Management
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Storm Drain Testing...Why Do We Do It?

Every summer the City of Portsmouth conducts water quality testing of their stormwater drains. 75 sites are chosen within the City limits to be tested during "dry weather" conditions. On dry weather days when there has not been rain for 48 to 72 hours, two stormwater technicians inspect the selected drainage structures to determine if there is flowing water in them. The premise is that during dry weather, the drainage system should be dry within 2 to 3 days following a rainfall. If flowing water is found, it could be an indicator of an illegal discharge into the drainage system. It could also mean that groundwater is seeping into the drainage system or that a sanitary pipe has been mistakenly connected from a

house or building to a storm drainage pipe. Or...it could be that the pipe system is influenced by tidal waters.

If water is found to be flowing at a selected structure, the technicians test the water for various parameters in an attempt to determine the nature of the flow. When a water sample is first taken, the pH and salinity are tested. Other tests are then run to determine the level of chlorine, copper, phenol and detergents in the water. If any of the numbers exceed the accepted value for that particular parameter, then another sample is taken from the same water and sent to the Hampton Roads Sanitation District's (HRSD) laboratory for more rigorous testing.

If HRSD's testing shows any of the parameters exceed the allowable limits, the technicians attempt to track the flow back to its source. If it can be determined that an illegal discharge is occurring and the source of such discharge can be identified, then the City takes action to notify the offender to cease the discharging activity. The City also advises the offender that unauthorized discharges into the drainage system violate federal, state and local laws.



Stormwater technicians Jason Champion & Juan Angarita take a water sample from a stormwater drainage structure.

Depending on the nature of the violation, the discharger may be asked to clean up the receiving drainage structure or waterway. The City may also pursue legal action if necessary.

Should the tracking efforts reveal a cross connection with the sanitary sewer system, the City's Public Utilities Department oversees the disconnection of the sanitary line from the storm drainage line. Should groundwater be the issue, failing storm drain pipe joints are the probable cause and the Department of Public Works is notified so that repairs can be made to the pipe.

If you see someone discharging into the drainage system, please call 393-8691.



Stormwater technician Jason Champion analyzes a sample to determine the Phenol level.

STORMWATER TIP OF THE

"CAR WASHING 101"

Wash your car with low or no phosphate detergents while it's parked on the lawn. This allows the runoff water to be absorbed and filtered by the soil and it will NOT kill your grass. Otherwise, use a commercial carwash that recycles the runoff water.