

WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?

During rain events, impervious surfaces such as rooftops, driveways, parking lots, and roads, prevent water from being absorbed into the ground. When a rainfall event occurs, the portion of water that is not absorbed into the ground becomes what is known as “stormwater runoff”. All properties contribute to stormwater runoff and property owners are responsible for storm drainage flowing through their property.

This flowing water picks up and carries a wide variety of pollutants and debris – such as soil, fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste, trash and motor oil – which then flow into storm drains or channels and eventually empty into the waterways used for recreation and drinking water. Unlike typical household wastewater (from sinks, toilets and showers) stormwater is not filtered and treated at a wastewater treatment plant. This means that the everyday pollutants carried by stormwater runoff have a direct impact on our local water quality.

Property owners are responsible for maintaining drainage easements located on their property in a neat and clean manner. This may include routine grounds keeping such as grass mowing as well as removal of trash, vegetation, and debris. Owners should ensure that drainage systems and structures are kept free of yard waste (grass clippings, tree trimmings, fallen limbs, and leaves) or other obstructions (privacy fencing or retaining walls) that may block the flow of water. Driveways, and their associated culverts, bridges, or other appurtenances, that cross public drainage systems (e.g., that cross over ditches or streams) are also property owner responsibilities.

Vegetative growth (trees, shrubs); firewood; driveways and their associated culverts or bridges; and fences or retaining walls, may be permitted or allowed in easements as long as they do not block the flow of storm drainage. Drainage directed from gutters, french drains, downspouts, swimming pools, retention walls, or other private systems to neighboring properties is a civil matter between the property owners. Moreover, owners that place obstructions, or fail to maintain property within public drainage easements (ie. structures, sheds, buildings, curbs, retaining walls) may be subject to civil action from adjacent property owners and may be subject to a notice of violation as determined by the City.

While the city may propose or recommend possible solutions, the city cannot design or otherwise engineer improvements on private property. Additionally, the City can not recommend a particular contractor or undertake any work outside a dedicated city drainage easement.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Keep easements and storm drains free of litter and debris. Do not rake, blow, or dump grass clippings or leaves into the storm drainage system. Keep the area easily accessible in case repairs or maintenance are necessary. Do not place sheds or other permanent structures in the easement or on top of drainage structures. Avoid obstructing the flow of stormwater with privacy fencing.

Apply pesticides and fertilizers in accordance with label instructions to minimize chemicals entering the stormwater system. Never dump pet waste, used motor oil, paint, chemicals, or other substances into a storm drain. Additionally, due to various chemicals existing in swimming pools, owners should never drain a swimming pool into storm drains without first treating the water to remove detrimental chemicals. These pollutants are often extremely difficult and costly to remediate or remove.

Report dumping or spilling of hazardous materials into a drainage system to the Fire Department by calling 911 in case of an emergency, or contact Candy Serna at 409-986-5559 or email at cserna@cityofhitchcockpd.com in a non-emergency situation.

FLOOD SAFETY

1. Do not walk through flowing water.

Drowning is the No. 1 cause of flood related deaths, mostly during times of rapidly rising water. Currents are deceptive; six inches of moving water can sweep you off your feet.

2. Do not drive through a flooded area.

More people drown in their cars than anywhere else. Vehicles also push water into homes and cause additional property damage. Do not drive around road barriers. "Turn around, don't drown!"

3. Stay away from power lines and electrical wires.

The No. 2 cause of flood deaths after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to the power company. Have your electricity turned off by the power company.

4. Evacuate if needed:

If emergency officials tell you to evacuate or leave your home, go immediately to a safe shelter, hotel or relative's house.

5. Look before you step.

After a flood, the ground and floors are covered with debris including broken bottles and nails. Floors and stairs that have been covered with mud can be quite slippery. Fence planks with nails can wash into your yard, driveway, or city street.

IMPORTANT USEFUL WEBSITES

www.fema.gov

www.usgs.gov

www.floods.org

www.tfma.org

www.weather.gov

www.floodsmart.gov