

# Water Watch



## Leaves, Grass Clippings and Dirt in Gutters

The City of Orem is committed to keeping our water clean. We also try to minimize the risk of property damage due to flooding. There are, however, many challenges to keeping our storm water clean. Although the City regularly sweeps streets and cleans storm drains and sumps, we still need your help.

Some of the things that can affect the quality of the water that that runs off of the City's streets are leaves and grass clippings, pet wastes, dirt and sediment, automobile fluids, construction runoff, and toxic chemicals.

Let's take a moment to discuss how you as homeowners and business owners can help, especially with cleaning gutters and reporting problems.

### City Code

City code states, "It shall be unlawful to place or spill without immediately cleaning up any material or debris on a public street. It shall also be unlawful for the driver of any vehicle to

track mud or dirt onto a public street."

Further it states, "The owners and occupants of all real property shall keep the public sidewalks, curbs and gutters abutting the property free from debris, dirt, rocks, weeds, snow and ice."

Finally it states, "It shall be unlawful to repair any vehicle on a public street in such a manner as to spill debris, oil or grease onto the street."

### Common Problems

Leaves and grass clippings can plug storm sewer inlets and cause localized flooding. An overabundance of decaying plant material can also lead to excessive nutrients in waters which can potentially cause algae blooms in lakes or contamination in groundwater supplies.

Dirt and sediment are also concerns, as they can affect both the quality and the quantity of water that can be handled by the storm sewer system.

"Sediment is the most prevalent water pollutant. America's water is polluted by more than one billion tons of sediment annually."

Suspended sediment makes water unpleasant for recreation. It also poses a risk of getting trapped in the gills of fish.

When sediment settles out, it covers river and lake bottoms causing problems for aquatic plants and animals. Sediment can also settle out in catch basins, sumps, storm sewer pipes and detention basins

Storm water also carries pollutants such as hydrocarbons and heavy metals deposited on streets by cars, pesticide and herbicide residue and anything that anyone dumps in a storm sewer inlet. During the past few years, we have seen evidence of people dumping paint, oil, transmission fluid, concrete washout, carpet cleaner effluent and trash in gutters, storm sewers and sumps in Orem.

*Continued on back*

*If you wouldn't drink it, don't dump it!*

City of Orem Public Works  
955 N 900 West  
Orem, UT 84057  
Phone: 801-229-7500  
Fax: 801-229-7599



### *Leaves and Grass continued*

In addition, pollutants can be washed down the gutter into storm sewers when people hose off their driveways and sidewalks, wash their car in the driveway, over water their lawns and fail to correct sprinklers that spray onto sidewalks, driveways and streets.

#### Citizen Responsibility

Please do your part by:

- ? Composting leaves and grass clippings or applying them to flower beds and gardens.
- ? Sweeping driveways, sidewalks and gutters.
- ? Always recycling used oil and antifreeze.
- ? Cleaning up after pets.
- ? Reporting illegal dumping by calling 229-7500.

Together we can keep our lakes, rivers and drinking water clean and uncontaminated.

Source: Air & Waste Management Association, *Environmental Resource Guide—Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention* (1994).

## Winterize Your Water System

With fall upon us and winter fast approaching, we need to think about winterizing to prevent damage to pipes caused by colder temperatures.

Below are ideas that may help prevent damage to water pipes inside and outside of your home.

1. Disconnect all outside hoses from taps.
2. Shut off and drain lawn sprinkler system.
3. Make sure swamp cooler is turned off and drained for the winter.
4. Leave heat on in your home or business if you are going out of town.
5. Open doors and cabinets to

allow heat to circulate to all areas in your home where piping exist.

6. Insulate any water lines that are exposed to uninsulated exterior walls.
7. If you live in a mobile home, insulate the pipes underneath.
8. If temperatures drop to 10 degrees or stays below freezing for an extended period of time, leave a small stream of water running to prevent freezing.

If you have questions please call The City of Orem Public Works Drinking Water section at 229-7570.

## Sewer Endorsements for Homeowner's Insurance

In June, 1997, Milwaukee, Wisconsin saw eight straight days of heavy rain and flooding. During this time of duress, many homeowners to "discover(ed) costly gaps in insurance coverage."

These homeowners had not purchased sewer endorsements for their homeowner's insurance. This led to many being denied claims to restore their basements after sewer backups caused by the flooding.

Most homeowner's insurance covers backups that happen on the property insured. For example, a backup caused by a tree root or something else blocking the pipe

on your property, will likely be covered.

By purchasing a sewer endorsement or rider, your policy will also cover sewer backups that do not happen on your property. This endorsement is fairly inexpensive, especially compared to the cost of replacing your valuables in the event of a sewer backup.

Contact your insurance agent for more details and to make sure your current policy will cover damages from sewer backups.

Source: Derus, Michele, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, June 28, 1997 (<http://www.jsonline.com/news/sunday/real/0629insure.stm>)