

# WaterWatch



## Rainwater Harvesting

The collection of rainwater can be traced as far back as ancient times, some 3,000 years ago, if not further. The need for water is a basic human essential for survival.

In the days of the Roman Empire rain water collection cisterns were common place. A giant underground cistern in Istanbul collected rain water from the city above.



Today, we use reservoirs to collect rain water. We run this water through vast pipe systems, we treat it, and when we turn on the water tap – good, clean water is there for us to use. We really don't really seem to care where it comes from or even how it gets in our house or place of business. The individual collecting of rain water became a thing of the past.

In the United States, the revival of collecting or harvesting rainwater began in the 1990's, first driven by the Clean Water Act, enacted in 1972, and then second, storm water regulations requiring municipalities to obtain permits to prevent harmful pollutants from entering the stormwater stream. Cities are required to develop stormwater management programs whose intent is to improve the quality of stormwater runoff.

One acceptable method of improving the quality of stormwater runoff is to promote the use of rain water harvesting. Rain water harvesting can be as simple as placing barrels where downspouts can fill barrels with rain water. This water

can be reused to water gardens, lawns, trees, to wash cars, or any other non-drinking purpose. More complex systems of rain water harvesting involve large underground tanks, with pumps and filtration systems that allow its use for any purpose that the home or business owner desires. Harvesting rain water can help reduce both energy consumption and water bills.

Before 2009, any rain water that fell on your property didn't belong to you. It belonged to the State of Utah. However, in 2009, the State Legislature passed a bill, Senate Bill 129, which allows individuals to collect and store up to 2,500 gallons of rainwater in an underground container. Above ground rain water harvesting is limited to no more than two containers that cannot exceed 100 gallons each. Rain water harvesting does not require a valid water right however it is necessary to register your rain water harvesting with the Utah Division of Water Rights. You can register at <http://waterrights.utah.gov/forms/rainwater.asp>

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

**Stormwater Hotline:**

**801-229-7577**

City of Orem Public Works

1450 W 550 North

Orem, UT 84057

## Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day

The Utah County Health Department is sponsoring a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day for April 7, 2012 at the Provo Towne Centre Mall (west parking lot). Wastes will be collected between 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM.

### What to bring:

- Medications
- Gasoline/fuels/motor oil/lubricants
- Antifreeze
- Solvents/paint thinners
- Aerosol cans/paints/stains
- Pesticides/herbicides
- Glues/adhesives
- Fluorescent light bulbs
- Mercury thermometers
- Photographic chemicals
- Electronics

### What NOT to bring

- Containers larger than 5 gallons
- Ammunition/explosives
- Compressed gas tanks/propane tanks
- Asbestos materials
- PCB-related materials
- Medical/biological waste
- Radioactive waste
- Fire extinguishers
- Business/commercial/construction waste
- No mixed wastes

For more information at 801-815-7525 or [www.utahcountyhealth.org/hhw](http://www.utahcountyhealth.org/hhw).

## Home Improvement Projects

Home improvement projects are a common event in most households. A fresh coat of paint or a new tile floor can spruce up nearly any home.

The waste products produced during a home improvement project from a single home may seem insignificant, but if many homes in our community use similar products and dispose of them in the storm drain, the combined effect could become a major problem. Home improvement materials, if washed down the street and into a storm drain, not only stain the gutters and streets, but also add many harmful chemicals and sediments to our water bodies. Additionally, many building materials can dry and harden, and then clog storm drains.

Regardless of where around the house your home improvement project is, or what materials you are using, you will want to ensure that all chemical materials are used and disposed of properly. By practicing healthy home improvement habits, homeowners can keep common pollutants like paint, adhesives, stains and varnishes off the ground and out of the storm drains.

Here are some suggestions:

Use water-based paints whenever possible. They are less toxic than oil-based paints and easier to clean up. Look for products labeled "latex" or "cleans with water."

Whether you are using water or oil-based paint, never pour leftover paint on the ground, in the gutter or storm drain. Never clean brushes or rinse paint containers in the street, gutter or near a storm drain. Clean water-based paints in the sink. Clean oil-based paints with thinner, which can be reused by putting it in a jar to settle out the paint particles and then pouring off the clear liquid for future use.

Use hazardous substances like paint, solvents and cleaners in the smallest amount possible and follow the directions on the label. Clean up spills immediately. If you spill liquid building material or other hazardous material, use towels, absorbents or kitty litter immediately to prevent the spill from flowing into the street. If you use kitty litter or powder absorbents, be sure to sweep it up and dispose of it in the trash.

Sweep-up and properly dispose of construction debris such as concrete and mortar. Don't allow concrete washout to enter the gutters or the storm drains.

If you are cutting countertops or tile, do the cutting indoors. If this is not possible, set up your saw on a tarp to collect any slurry from the process. Do not cut in the street or on driveways and sidewalks, as these areas drain to the gutter and will eventually get into storm sewer systems. The water from cutting tile and stone can be disposed of in the sanitary sewer. The grit and slurry, however, should not go down your drains. Let the slurry dry and then dispose of it in the garage.

Dispose of all wastewater from carpet or upholstery cleaning into a sink or toilet. If you hire someone to clean your carpets or upholstery, have them dispose of the wastewater properly.

By planning ahead and using some common sense, you can keep storm water clean while making your home the way you want it.



### Sources

- <http://www.ctioa.org/reports/fr79.html>
- <http://www.casperwy.gov/Portals/0/docs/Stormwater/aroundTheHouse.pdf>
- <http://www.chulavistaca.gov/clean/StormWater/WhatToKnow/Prevention/HomeImprovement.asp>
- [http://www2.sbcounty.gov/flood/npdes/prevention\\_residents.htm](http://www2.sbcounty.gov/flood/npdes/prevention_residents.htm)