



STORMWATER GENERAL INFORMATION AND FAQ'S

To protect the Oldman River ecosystem and water quality, the City of Lethbridge has a [Drainage Bylaw \(5594\)](#). The bylaw applies to everyone and regulates what can and cannot be put into the stormwater system.

It is important to know that:

- Anything that enters street storm drains goes directly into the Oldman River untreated.
- In order to protect water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat, only clean water or naturally occurring stormwater should enter the drainage system.
- The stormwater system relies on both pipes underground and surface features to effectively carry stormwater away from our properties to the river.

Q. WHAT ARE THE HARMFUL MATERIALS THAT MUST NOT ENTER STORMDRAINS?

A. The following items are harmful to stormwater and should be disposed of appropriately:

- trash, soil, leaves, and grass clippings
- cooking oils and grease
- gasoline, motor oil, transmission fluid and antifreeze
- solvents and paints
- water from pools and hot tubs
- industrial waste
- soaps or detergents (including biodegradable products)
- pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers
- cement/concrete waste
- sawdust and construction materials
- any substance that gives off an odour.

**For more information on how to dispose of these items, visit

<https://curbside.lethbridge.ca/tools/waste-wizard>

Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STORM SEWER SYSTEMS AND SANITARY SEWER SYSTEMS?

A. Storm sewer systems are not connected to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, and therefore goes directly to the Oldman River, untreated. Sanitary sewer systems are treated at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, and include the drains within your households, such as shower drains and sink drains.



Q. HOW DOES THE DRAINAGE BYLAW AFFECT CITY RESIDENTS?

A. Before disposing of water in storm drains, residents are encouraged to take a moment to stop and think about what chemicals and other materials are in the water that could harm the river environment.

Only clean water should be put in storm drains. If disposal water contains any other substances it should be put into the sewer system through household drains or allowed to run-off on the ground to prevent the water from entering a storm drain.

Q. CAN I DUMP ANY ITEM DOWN THE STORMDRAIN NEAR MY HOUSE?

A. No Person shall Release, or allow to be Released any Prohibited Material into the Storm Drainage System, except as permitted in the Drainage Bylaw #5594.

Q. CAN I STILL WASH MY CAR IN THE DRIVEWAY OR STREET?

A. The City recommends using a commercial car wash to clean your vehicle. Water from commercial car washes is discharged to the City's wastewater treatment facility where the wastewater is cleaned and treated before being returned to the river. If you do wash your car in the driveway or street, do not use soap. Even biodegradable soaps will cause harm to living things in the river. Use only water and ensure that dirt or oil from your car does not get washed down the storm drain.

Q. WHAT ABOUT WATER FROM MY HOT TUB OR SWIMMING POOL?

A. The City recommends that water from hot tubs and larger pools is drained or pumped to a household sink, toilet or floor drain connected to the sewer. This water contains toxic disinfectants and chemicals that control algae. Even if water tests show that these chemicals are depleted, they remain in the water as a variety of toxic compounds.

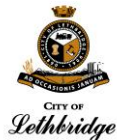
Q. CAN I PIPE MY DOWNSPOUT TO THE ALLEY?

A. The Drainage Bylaw requires downspouts to end at least two metres away from any sidewalk, road, park, alley, lane or surface drainage facility. The two-metre buffer zone allows some of the run-off to absorb into the ground rather than enter the storm system. This also helps prevent icing on sidewalks and lanes in winter.

Further, downspouts should never be connected to the weeping tile of your house or building. This greatly increases the risk of basement flooding.

Q. CAN I BLOCK OR FILL IN THE CONCRETE SWALE INSIDE MY FENCE?

A. Components of the surface drainage system include paved walkways and grassed or concrete drainage courses (swales). The Bylaw requires that the surface drainage system be kept clear of debris and obstructions at all times. Retaining walls, terraces, gardens, or sheds cannot be constructed or placed in these areas. These systems are



designed to carry rainwater and any obstructions could contribute to flooding during a heavy rainstorm. Concrete swales commonly run along the back or side of residential properties. If a fence is built over a concrete swale, there must be at least 0.15 metres (6 inches) of clearance between the bottom of the fence and the top of the swale.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T COMPLY WITH THE DRAINAGE BYLAW?

A. Failure to comply with the Drainage Bylaw can result in fines ranging from \$75 to \$10,000 and/or the cost of containment and clean up.

Q. WHO SHOULD I CONTACT TO REPORT AN INCIDENT?

A. It is important that you report any discharge of prohibited materials whether accidental or intentional.

If the release creates an immediate danger to public health and safety, call 9-1-1 for the Fire Department Hazardous Materials Team to respond. For other violations and incidents, please report them to City of Lethbridge 311.