



City of Lakewood
Department of Housing
and Building

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Residential Stormwater Management Guidelines

The Clean Water Act, enforced by the US EPA and Ohio EPA requires the City and property owners mitigate storm water drainage into the sanitary sewer system. This prevents the system from overflowing into Lake Erie and the Rocky River during heavy storm conditions. Dye tests at individual properties are performed in an effort to find if storm water is entering the sanitary sewer system. When construction is performed, homeowners are required to correct improper connections.

Depending on the extent of the construction and site conditions, disconnecting (also known as “splashing”) downspouts from the sewer system may be an acceptable solution to correct any improper connections. Here are some important site factors to keep in mind:

- Water must be directed at least 5 feet away from foundations *and* neighboring properties.
- Water cannot drain onto neighboring properties, puddle where it can freeze to create slip hazards, or create any other nuisance condition.
- Discharge from downspouts should not washout plants or soil.
- Surface water must be absorbed or dissipate within 48 hours of a rain event. Standing water can be a breeding area for mosquitos.
- Ground area must be at least 10% of the roof area drained to allow for adequate infiltration.

Once site factors are considered, the actual work of “splashing” can begin. This involves cutting the downspout, attaching fittings or extensions, adding splash blocks or stone to control water flow, and plugging the riser coming out of the ground. Here are some ways to handle rainwater and address common site issues:

- **Direct the water into existing landscaping:** If you have a flower garden, vegetable garden, trees or shrubs nearby that drains well and doesn't border on your property line, direct the water into this garden.
- **Create a Rain Garden:** This involves choosing an area at least five to ten feet away from your house and property lines, preferably a low area, and excavating an 8' X 10' area 4" to 8" deep. If the soil is clay or compacted, break up the clods and add compost or other soil amendments to increase drainage and create spaces for root penetration. Grade the garden so that water spreads out evenly. The garden can then be planted with native wildflowers, grasses, or shrubs of your choosing. Mature plants will tolerate more water than seedlings and may be a better choice for new rain gardens. It will take about a year for the plants to become established. Place taller plants that are more tolerant of water in the middle of the garden, and smaller plants that like drier conditions around the edges. Direct the water into the garden. (More information on rain gardens and native plant species can be found at <http://www.cuyahogawcd.org/programs/rain-gardens-native-plants> or consult your local nursery).

- **Create a Rainwater Harvesting System:** A rain barrel collects and stores rainwater from downspouts for future use watering lawns and gardens. A rain barrel is made using a 55-gallon drum, a vinyl garden hose, PVC couplings, and a fitted cover to keep out debris and insects. Rain barrels are usually elevated to benefit from the effect of gravity when using the water, however a pump can also be used. Rain barrels have the potential of lowering water bills since tap water is conserved. Kits are available online, or at local hardware and home centers. The Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District offers local hands-on workshops where attendees build their own rain barrels. For more information visit:
<http://www.cuyahogaswcd.org/programs/rain-barrels>