



PROTECT OUR WATER

A RESIDENT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING STORM WATER

Did you know that storm drains lead to the ocean?

That's right! Anything that goes into a storm drain will end up in the ocean. This is why it is important for **everyone** to be aware of the dangers of putting harmful things down the storm drains and do their part to help stop pollution.

I don't dump anything into storm drains so I'm okay, right?

Not necessarily. When it rains, the water that goes down the storm drain is called storm water runoff. Storm water runoff itself does not usually harm the environment. However, driveways, sidewalks, streets, and even rooftops tend to accumulate pollutants quickly. Typical pollutants include oil, grease, traces of metals, sediment, phosphorous, nitrogen and other chemicals. The storm water runoff washes these pollutants off your property and carries them into our storm drains, where they affect water quality in our streams and the ocean.

Then why do we have storm drains?

Well, when it rains, water seeps into the ground, adding to O'ahu's water supply. At times, it rains so much that the ground cannot absorb it all (like a kitchen sponge that is filled to capacity). Storm water runoff occurs when excess rainwater then flows over the surface of the ground until it finds its way to the ocean through streams and the storm drain system. The storm drain system helps to prevent flooding so your roads and homes are safe.

So what can I do to help?

This brochure includes some helpful tips you can use to **Protect Our Water**.

IN THE GARAGE

- Don't use water to clean your garage and driveway. When you use cleaners to get the oil and gunk off your driveway, garage, or carport floor, wipe it up. If you hose it down your driveway, you're sending the cleaning chemicals and oils straight into the storm drain where they go right to the ocean.
- Do not dump automotive fluids (e.g., antifreeze, brake fluid, used motor oil) into storm drains or let them run down the street where the rain could wash them down the storm drain. That would have the same result as dumping the materials directly into our ocean!

PROTECT OUR WATER: WHAT CAN I DO?



AROUND THE HOUSE

- Properly dispose of household products that contain chemicals, such as insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil and other auto fluids. Don't pour them on the ground, into roadway gutters, or into storm drains.

IN THE GARDEN

- Use pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers only as needed. This will save you money and help reduce the chances of rain washing pollutants down the storm drain.
- After mowing your lawn, pick up the grass clippings and throw them in the trash so the rain does not send them into the storm drain. Fertilizers and grass clippings can cause algae to grow, which use up oxygen in the water. This harms fish, coral and stream life because they cannot survive in water with low oxygen levels.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

- If possible, work with your contractor to reduce the amount of dirt that is excavated. It will save you money and prevent the dirt from polluting the ocean.
- If you decide to do-it-yourself rather than hire a contractor, educate yourself on the types of permits that are required. Best management practices (BMPs) should be used to prevent or treat the water that flows out of your yard and into the storm drains.

Need more information? Go to HDOT's Storm Water Web site at stormwaterhawaii.com.

