

# Michigan Environmental Health Association Fact Sheet

An Organization Of Professionals Dedicated To The Improvement Of Health Through The Management Of The Environment

MEHA.NET

June 2003



## Illicit Wastewater Connections

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### What is an Illicit Connection?

An illicit connection is any instance when untreated wastewater empties to storm sewers or onto the ground. This can pollute surface and groundwater, causing public health concerns. Often, these contaminants come from a variety of sources such as:

- sanitary sewer pipes
- overflow pipes from septic fields
- sump pumps
- and floor drains.

All of these sources can be improperly connected to the storm sewer, which empties to a nearby creek or river, or directly to the environment.

### Examples of illicit connections in a home:

- Basement toilet or shower connected to storm drain
- Laundry wastewater discharged to sump pump that drains into storm sewer
- Laundry wastewater dumping out to lawn surface
- Overflow pipe dumping sewage from septic system to nearby creek or drain

### Why are illicit connections a problem?

Illicit connections can lead to the pollution of surface and drinking water with wastewater. These wastes can be contaminated with infectious bacteria such as E. coli. E. coli is a common bacteria that lives in all human and animal intestines. Some strains are capable of causing human illness. Infection and disease can be spread when people drink, swim, or come into contact with the contaminated water source.

Are there laws regulating illicit connections?

Illicit connections are not only a potential health hazard, but also illegal. Most local governments have regulations against illicit connections. The regulations can prohibit improper discharge of untreated sewage into the storm drain or directly to a creek or river.

What you can do:

- Check to make sure you do not have any illicit connections in your home by:
  - Making sure that all sources of wastewater go to the sewer or onsite septic system.
    - Sinks
    - Showers
    - Laundry
    - Toilets
- Making sure sump pumps and footing drains do not have any wastewater draining to them. Sump pumps and footing drains should be connected to a storm sewer or discharged away from the house foundation.
  
- Maintaining your onsite septic system by:
  - Conserving water use
  - Pumping your tank every 3-5 years
  - Not disposing of household hazardous wastes in sinks and toilets
  - Avoid driving or parking vehicles on you drain field

For more information:

- Contact your county health department to ask about illicit connections laws, and to find out if you have any illicit connections.
- Online:
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Illicit Connection Detection and Elimination: [http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/illi\\_2.cfm](http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/illi_2.cfm)
  - Wayne County Department of Environment, Watershed Management Division: <http://www.wcdoe.org/Watershed/watershed.htm>
  - The Rouge River Project: <http://rougerivercom.readyhosting.com/techtopyillicit/index.html>