

## **Prohibited Discharges into the Sanitary Sewer - Sump Pump Exemptions**

For many years City of Wahpeton Ordinances have prohibited all clear water sources, such as sump pumps, roof downspouts, footing drains, and area drains, from discharging into the sanitary sewer system. Recently the Wahpeton City Council amended its ordinances to allow sump pumps to discharge into the sanitary sewer system in the winter months between November 15 and March 15, if the property owner applies for and obtains a permit from the City. If you have questions that are not answered below, please contact the Public Work Department at 642-6565 or stop by City Hall at 1900 4<sup>th</sup> Street North.

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**1. Q. Why is the City taking steps to reduce sump pump discharges into the sanitary sewer?**

A. Basement backups, sewage bypasses to the river, and higher pumping costs are the result of large increases in flows experienced by the City's sanitary sewer system within half an hour of the onset of rainstorms and during the following several days. As a recent example, in the weeks leading up to the rainstorm of June 2, 2007, the City's sewage lift stations were pumping about 0.8 million gallons per day (MGD). On June 2 the sewer system was overwhelmed with rain-induced inflow and infiltration and a total of 3.2 MGD was pumped that day. Over the next several days flows in the system gradually decreased to about 1.0 MGD on June 5. Approximately 150 homes and business suffered damages from basement backups on June 2.

Sump pump discharges to the sanitary sewer have been demonstrated to be significant sources of extraneous wet weather flows throughout the country, and experience indicates the same problem exists in Wahpeton.

**2. Q. Besides sump pumps, what other sources contribute to high wet weather flows in the sanitary sewer, and what is the City doing about those?**

A. Storm water can enter the sanitary sewer through manhole covers or cracks in the pavement around manhole covers, through joints or cracks in manhole walls, through cross connections with the storm sewer, or through pipe joints or cracks.

- 1.) The City is installing sealed manhole covers to replace covers that have exposed lifting holes or are vented style and is repairing pavement around manholes to prevent surface water from entering the sewer. For 2008 \$20,000 has been budgeted for manhole cover replacements and repairs, and similar amounts will be budgeted for the next several years.
- 2.) In 2007 the City completed the 2nd year of an ongoing program to repair deteriorated manholes, having increased its budget for manhole repairs from \$2,000 in 2005 to \$30,000 in 2008. Approximately 30 manholes have been reconstructed to be water-tight, preventing storm water infiltration, and to be structurally sound.
- 3.) The City smoke tested approximately 15% of the sanitary sewer collection system in the older areas of the City, including Dakota Avenue, to identify sources of storm water inflow, and will test the remainder of the system over the next 2 years. Results from the 2007 smoke testing showed no cross connections with the storm sewer system, with one minor exception, since repaired, and no rain gutters directly connected to the sanitary sewers.

**3. Q. What if my sump pump discharge pipe freezes up in winter or creates a safety problem for me or my neighbors?**

A. You may apply for a Winter Discharge Permit that will allow you to discharge your sump pump into the sanitary sewer from November 15 to March 15 for a fee of \$15/month.

**4. Q. If I am issued a permit for winter discharge into the sanitary sewer do I still need to have my sump pump plumbed to the outside of my home or business?**

A. Yes, all sump pumps, with or without a winter discharge permit, must be plumbed to discharge outside the building. Permitted connections to the sanitary sewer need to include piping and valves to direct discharges outside the building between March 15 and November 15.

**5. Q. I currently have a sump pump discharging into the sanitary sewer. Do I need a permit to leave it connected?**

A. No, until March 15, 2008 an existing connection to the sanitary sewer may remain in place without a permit. However, all sump pump discharges need to be removed from the sanitary sewer after March 15, and any new sump pump connections will require a Winter Discharge Permit.

**6. Q. Will the City inspect my plumbing to check that my sump pump does not discharge into the sanitary sewer after March 15?**

A. Yes, after March 15 the City will begin random sump pump inspections of as many homes and businesses as time allows.

**7. Q. What happens if I do not let the sump pump inspector into my home?**

A. A fee of \$75 per month will be added to your utility bill until your home/business sump pump is inspected.

**8. Q. Do I need a permit to correct my sump pump discharge?**

A. No, a City permit is not needed to reroute your sump pump discharge outside the building, unless you plan to connect directly into an existing City storm sewer.

**9. Q. Where can I run the sump pump hose? What type of hose works best?**

A. You should run your sump pump hose at least 8 - 10' away from your house to avoid it "recycling" back into the house. It is acceptable to run it on your front or back yard, or to the street. You should not run the hose through the curb and gutter. Try also to avoid running the water directly onto your neighbor's property. The City receives numerous complaints from neighbors about wet yards and streets, but this will be difficult to avoid.

Most people use the flexible, black hose that can be moved around easily; however, this pipe's capacity can be greatly reduced if it is rolled up or extremely curvy, and many people have problems when it is not properly located or unfolded during a storm. It also is not recommended to use this type of hose in the winter. The smooth, white PVC pipe (1 1/2" diameter) has more capacity, is less susceptible to freezing and works better in situations where you do not need to move the hose around.

**10. Q. How can I prevent or reduce water problems in my basement?**

A. 1. Install rains gutters on your house and direct the downspouts away from your home. If you already have rain gutters, make sure that they are installed correctly and are cleaned out regularly, and that the downspouts are draining at least 3-5 feet away from your foundation.

2. Shape any landscaping to grade away at least 5 feet from your home's foundation. Soils around a house tend to compact and drop after construction, creating a situation in which yard drainage may be directed up next to the house, increasing the potential for water intrusion.

Many people fill in this area with landscaping rock, which may hide the actual soil slope under them, and has the potential to create an area next to the house where water can build up. You may need to remove the rock, add clay soil to grade away from the house and then reinstall the rock or other landscaping.

Look for any obstructions in your yard that may prohibit surface water from flowing away from your home, or through your yard. This often happens when a storage shed is built too close to your home or is blocking drainage in the back of your lot. Often drainage swales in rear yards or between home are blocked during landscaping. Also it is common to see sand boxes, gardens or other items that may block drainage. It is important that the water can run out to a curb line or storm sewer drain without being blocked.

**11. Q. Where can I obtain a Winter Discharge Permit?**

A. Permit applications can be obtained from the Public Works Department, City Hall, 1900 4<sup>th</sup> St. N. Call 642-6565 for information.