

Illegal Stormwater Connections to the Sewage System

General Information

The Sanitary Sewer System was designed and installed to collect and transport the sewage flows generated by Ebensburg customers. The System was not sized, nor will it accommodate, an excessive amount of extraneous clear water. Such extraneous clear water is commonly referred to as infiltration and inflow, or I&I.

Ebensburg Municipal Authority's regulations and municipal ordinances prohibit any person to permit, allow or cause to enter into the public sanitary sewer system any stormwater or surface water.

Please read the information below for we feel that it will address some of the additional questions and/or concerns that you may have in regard to the Sewer Testing Regulations.

Why are these regulations being enforced now?

In order to control the overloading of the sanitary sewer system, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has required each local government to adopt a corrective action plan. One of the requirements of the plan is to reduce the overloading of the sanitary sewer system by removing rain or stormwater from the sewer lines.

What's the problem if drains or downspouts are connected to the sanitary sewer?

Sanitary sewers are designed to accept a rather constant flow of sewage from household water. The sudden, rapid flow of rainwater from roofs, patios, driveways, etc., can overload the sanitary sewer causing them to overflow, or surcharge. Surcharges can lift manhole lids allowing sewage to overflow into streets and yards. Surcharges can also activate overflow pipes that discharge sewage directly into streams. Surcharges also cause sewage to back-up into basement floor drains and fixtures.

What regulations are violated by connecting rain downspouts to a sanitary sewer?

To prevent the overloading of sanitary sewers, the connection of stormwater to sanitary sewers is not permitted. Regulators enforcing this matter are:

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Environmental Protection Agency
Borough of Ebensburg Ordinance #558
Borough of Ebensburg ordinance #511

Who do these regulations apply to?

All customers on the Ebensburg system.

What must property owners do to comply with these regulations?

ALL extraneous sources of stormwater must be disconnected from the public sanitary sewer system. Cracked or broken service pipes, foundation drains, driveway or area drains, downspouts, leaking joints, sump pump discharges, footer drains, entrance drains, wall or floor seepage are all examples of illegal sources of stormwater.

How does the borough determine that I have an illegal connection?

Ebensburg Borough conducts a variety of tests at every property on the sewer system which may include dye tests, smoke tests and air tests.

What is a dye test?

Dye testing involves placing a non-staining water soluble dye tablet in the drain or downspout of your property and flushing it with water. The area is then examined for the appearance of traces of dyed water.

What is a smoke test?

Smoke testing involves forcing a non-toxic, non-staining smoke through the sewer system by the use of air blowers. The area is then examined for smoke leaking from the system, which indicates a leak that would allow water to enter the system.

What is an air test?

Air testing involves sealing the sewer system and then forcing air under pressure into the system. If the system is not able to remain pressurized on its own, a leak exists that would allow water to enter the system.

If I am notified that I have an improper connection, what do I need to do about it?

The borough recommends consulting a plumber or general contractor with underground utility experience to help determine the best corrective action plan. DO NOT ignore the notice. You are allowed 90 days to correct the violation. The problem will not go away on its own. The penalties for non-compliance are severe.

What am I supposed to do with my stormwater?

All stormwater is supposed to be retained on the property. Downspouts should dump onto a splash pad allowing the rain water to disperse across the ground. Stormwater pipes are not permitted to discharge through curbs. You are not permitted to intentionally discharge stormwater onto a neighbor's property.

Will I have to dig up my floors to make repairs?

This testing requirement does NOT, in most cases, apply to any under-slab plumbing. Repair of under-slab plumbing is only required when conditions are monitored in a viewport or some other condition indicates that water is infiltrating the plumbing under the slab.

Who is responsible for the repairs?

The responsibility of the costs of any required repair work that may be necessary in order to be fully compliant with these regulations falls solely on the property owner.

How much will it cost to make repairs?

The cost to correct I&I violations is case specific. The removal of downspouts can be relatively inexpensive. Replacement of an entire service lateral can be expensive, especially if it is under a wall or driveway. You should contact a plumber or excavating contractor for a price quote.

For more information about compliance with sewer system regulations, please contact:

Borough of Ebensburg
(814)472-8780