

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Drainage Bylaw #5594 in effect June 29, 2009

To protect the Oldman River ecosystem and water quality, the City of Lethbridge has approved a new Drainage Bylaw. The bylaw applies to everyone and regulates what can and cannot be put into the stormwater system.

It is important to know that:

- Anything that enters street storm drains goes directly into the Oldman River untreated;
- In order to protect water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat, only clean water or naturally occurring stormwater should enter the drainage system
- If contaminants such as trash, pesticides, soil and chemicals are washed down the storm drains they will harm the river environment.

HARMFUL MATERIALS MUST NOT ENTER THE STORMWATER SYSTEM

For example:

- soil, sediment or other solid matter (including yard waste such as leaves and grass clippings).
- cooking oils and grease
- gasoline, motor oil, transmission fluid and antifreeze
- solvents and paints
- water from pools and hot tubs
- industrial waste
- soaps or detergents (including biodegradable products)
- pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers
- cement/concrete waste
- sawdust and construction materials
- any substance or combination of substances that emit an odour.

How does the Drainage Bylaw affect city residents?

Before disposing of water in storm drains, residents are encouraged to take a moment to stop and think about what materials are in the water that could harm the river environment.

Only clean water should be put in storm drains. If disposal water contains any other substances it should be put into the sewer system through household drains or allowed to run-off on the ground to prevent the water from entering a storm drain.

Can I still wash my car in the driveway or street?

The City recommends using a commercial car wash to clean your vehicle. Commercial car washes discharge to the City's wastewater treatment facility where the wastewater is cleaned and treated. If you do wash your car in the driveway or street, you cannot use soap. Even biodegradable soaps will harm living things in the river. Use water only and ensure that dirt or oil from your car does not get washed down the storm drain.

Hot tub and pool water

The City recommends that water from hot tubs and larger pools are drained or pumped to a sink, toilet or floor drain connected to the sanitary sewer. This water contains toxic disinfectants and/or algaecide chemicals. Even if water tests show that these chemicals are 'spent' and that more should be added, they have not disappeared and remain as a variety of toxic compounds.

Downspouts

The Drainage Bylaw requires downspouts to end at least two metres away from any sidewalk, road, park, alley, lane or surface drainage facility. The two-metre buffer zone allows some of the run-off to absorb into the ground before it enters the storm system. It also helps prevent icing on sidewalks and lanes in winter. Downspouts should never be connected to the weeping tile of your house or building.

Surface Drainage Facilities

Surface Drainage Facilities include paved walkways and concrete or grassed drainage courses (swales). The Bylaw requires Surface Drainage Facilities to be kept clear of debris and obstructions at all

times. Retaining walls, terraces, gardens, or sheds cannot be constructed or placed in these areas. In a heavy rainstorm these systems can flow full of rainwater, and any obstructions in the flow could cause flooding. Concrete swales commonly run along the back or side of residential properties. If a fence is built over a concrete swale, you must provide at least 0.15 metres (6 inches) of clearance between the bottom of the fence and the top of the swale.

What happens if you don't comply with the Drainage Bylaw?

Failure to comply with the Drainage Bylaw can result in fines ranging from \$75 to \$10,000 and/or the cost of remedial orders, containment and clean up.

Who should I contact to report an incident?

The Bylaw now obligates you to report and mitigate any discharge of prohibited materials whether accidental or intentional.

If the release creates an immediate danger to public health and safety, call **9-1-1** for the Fire Department HAZMAT Team to respond. For other violations and incidents, please report them to City of Lethbridge Public Operations at **403-320-3850**.