

Storm Water Disconnects

Building Department
Montague Town 1 Avenue A Turners Falls, MA 01376
413-863-3200

Dear Resident:

In response to EPA, DEP and Town concerns about the volume of water being treated at Montague WPCF and Erving WWTP the Town of Montague is reminding sewer users of the law and their obligation to prevent ground water discharge to the sewer. Below is the section of the town's sewer use regulations that addresses this issue.

SEWER USE REGULATION

ARTICLE III

Sec. 8. Surface and Groundwater Connections. *No person shall make connection of roof downspouts, exterior foundation or other drains, sump pumps, areaway drains, or other sources of surface runoff, flood or storm water, or groundwater to a building sewer or building drain which in turn is connected directly to a public sanitary sewer.*

Included here are answers to frequently asked questions.

What is a sanitary sewer?

A sanitary sewer is a pipe located in the Town right-of-way that is designed solely to transport wastewater from sanitary fixtures in your house or place of business to the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant. Sanitary sewers in your neighborhood are owned by the Town of Montague.

What is a storm sewer?

A storm sewer is a pipe located in the Town right-of-way that is designed to carry storm related water runoff. Storm sewers are normally much larger than sanitary sewers because they are designed to carry much larger amounts of flow. Storm sewers are owned, operated and maintained by the Town of Montague.

What is an illegal connection?

An illegal connection is a connection that permits extraneous storm related water (water from sources other than sanitary fixtures) to enter the sanitary sewer system. The extraneous storm related water is water that should be going to the storm sewer or allowed to soak into the ground without entering the sanitary sewer.

What are the different types of illegal connections?

Illegal connections include connections of roof downspouts, sump pumps, footing/foundation drains and basement drains to the house sanitary sewer lines. In addition, defective house sanitary sewer lines cause extraneous water to enter the sanitary sewers and thus they are also illegal connections.

Where should storm drainage from downspouts, sump pumps and /or other drain appurtenance be directed if it cannot be discharged to the sanitary sewer?

Modern construction standards generally call for water from sump pump, area drains and the like to be diverted to the storm sewers, front or back yards or above ground drainage ditches.

Why is it important for everyone to remove illegal connections?

Removal of illegal connections will significantly reduce the flow of extraneous storm related water in the sanitary sewer system. Currently high storm flows can bypass secondary treatment and are discharged to the Connecticut River. This extraneous flow in Miller's Falls is billed to Montague by the Town of Erving. If the Town and its residents can reduce the amount of storm water in the treatment plant, the costs of operating the plant can be significantly reduced and the volume of CSOs and partially treated discharge to the Connecticut River can be greatly reduced. One reason that cities don't allow this is that during big storms their sewage treatment facilities can be overloaded. When this happens, either sewage backs up into people's homes, or the sewage water only gets partially treated before being dumped in to local streams and rivers

How can surcharged sanitary sewers cause basement flooding?

A surcharged sewer flows at a level greater than the "normal" level. If the home has sanitary fixtures or floor drains at an elevation below the surcharge level, basement flooding can occur. The sanitary sewers have been designed to transfer sanitary waste only. Extraneous storm water flow added to the normal sanitary flow can exceed the capacity of the sanitary sewer resulting in a situation where the sanitary sewer is "surcharged". Basically, surcharging occurs when the amount of flow trying to get through a pipe exceeds the maximum capacity of the pipe thus building up pressure in the sanitary services and filling basements and crawlspaces. Reducing the extraneous flow will reduce the surcharging and sewer back-ups.

Do illegal connections really contribute large amounts of extraneous water to the sanitary sewer system?

Yes. For example, a typical eight-inch sanitary sewer can handle domestic sewage from up to 225 homes; however, it takes only five sump pumps operating at full capacity to overload an eight-inch sanitary sewer.

How does the Town of Montague identify illegal connection? The Town owns sewer-televising equipment, will conduct smoke and dye testing of the sewers and house lines and will make house inspections.