

The Difference Between Stormwater and Sanitary Sewers & Where Your Sump Pump Water Should Go

Often, people believe stormwater and sanitary sewers are the same things, although there is a big difference between the two. While it's easy to assume that all underground pipes head to a treatment plant, most cities have two drainage systems - one for rain and meltwater and another for waste.

The Stormwater Sewer system carries rainwater and runoff from yards, roof drains, foundation drains, sump pumps, parking areas, and street through a series of pipes and discharges it into creeks, rivers or lakes. In some instances, it can also be discharged into a retention pond, infiltration basin, or rain garden. An easy way to remember stormwater is that it comes from rain or other forms of precipitation.

The Sanitary Sewer system carries wastewater that comes from toilets, washing machines, sinks, and showers through a series of pipes to a wastewater treatment plant or ponds where it is treated. An easy way to remember wastewater is that it is the water we use and get rid of for daily living.

Can water from a sump pump or roof drains go into the sanitary sewer?

While it might seem harmless and be easier to connect the sump pump or roof drains to the sanitary sewer, the simple answer is NO!

In most communities in Minnesota not only is it a bad idea, but it is also illegal. During big storm events, if homes and businesses are sending stormwater into the sanitary sewer system the piping and treatment facility can be overloaded possibly causing sewer backups into people's homes.

How to properly discharge a sump pump?

There are two acceptable methods for discharging a sump pump. You can have the discharge pipe empty onto your property at least 10 feet from the home. With this approach, make sure the ground slopes away from the foundation and the pipe stays clear of debris or animals. The longer the pipe the less likely the water will infiltrate through the soil and end up back into your sump pit again.

The second option is connecting the sump pump to the storm drain, which is separate from the sanitary sewer system. This approach usually requires professional installation and may require approval from the city, but completely removes the water from your property.



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