

Keep Water Out of the Sewer System

The sanitary sewer system that is connected to your home or business is designed to carry wastewater that goes down drains inside your house or business to a Water Protection Facility. Sometimes, though, stormwater gets into the sanitary sewer system which causes the sewer system to fill up with too much water and may cause basement back-ups. You can help by reducing water that doesn't belong in the sanitary sewer system.

Disconnect from the Sewer System

Do your downspouts empty onto your yard or go underground? If they run underground, your downspouts may be connected to the house lateral line, which is connected to the sanitary sewer system. To help keep this excess water out of the city's sewer system, you should disconnect your downspouts.

We're talking about a lot of water! During a heavy storm, each downspout on your home can deliver 12 gallons of rainwater per minute to the sanitary sewer system if it's connected. Property owners should disconnect all downspouts, sump pumps, and area drains from the house lateral that may be connected to the sanitary sewer system.

This sheet contains general principles only, which may not be appropriate or safe for every property. Use good common sense. The city of St. Joseph is not responsible for your modifications and disclaims liability for your actions.

How to Disconnect Your Downspout

STEP 1:

Measure approximately 9 inches from where the downspout enters the sewer connection. Cut the downspout with a hacksaw.

STEP 2:

Cap the sewer standpipe. This prevents water from going in. In most cases, you should be able to use a simple rubber cap secured by a hose clamp. You can also use a wing-nut test plug if available cap sizes don't fit.

STEP 3:

Insert the downspout INTO the elbow (if you put the elbow into the downspout, it will leak) and secure with sheet metal screws. You may need to crimp the end of the downspout with a pair of pliers to get a good fit.

STEP 4:

Attach a downspout pipe extension to carry water away from the house and foundation. Be sure to insert the elbow into the extension to prevent leaks and secure with sheet metal screws. Place a splash block at the end of the downspout extension to prevent erosion where the water drains. The new downspout pipe can also be directed into a rain barrel or a rain garden.

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Disconnect Your Sump Pump

Typically, a sump pump is an appliance in your basement that pumps groundwater out from around your home's foundation. Some sump pumps can also be used to drain washing machines and/or sink drains in the basement. These types of sump pumps should be connected to the residential sanitary sewer system and are not the focus of this flyer.

However, sump pumps used to pump groundwater from around your home's foundation should not be connected to the sanitary sewer system. These sump pumps should pump groundwater directly out into your yard and away from your foundation. Pumping the water on your yard prevents excessive stormwater from entering the sewer system and being treated at the Water Protection Facility.

Groundwater sump pumps that are improperly connected to the sanitary sewer system should be disconnected from the sanitary sewer system. To disconnect your groundwater sump pump from the sanitary sewer system, you should:

1. Unplug your sump pump from its outlet.
2. Remove the old pipe from discharging into the floor drain.
3. Seal off the old connection to the sanitary sewer promptly to prevent sewer gas from entering your home.

4. Re-route your sump pump discharge line away from your foundation onto the yard, into a garden, or better yet, a rain garden on your property.

If your sump pump is directly wired rather than using a plug and an outlet, please contact a licensed and bonded electrician to disconnect your sump pump. If your sump pump is directly connected to a sanitary sewer pipe, please contact a licensed and bonded plumber to disconnect your sump pump. You should also be mindful of your neighbor's properties and avoid directing your discharge pipe toward their property.

