



With colder weather right around the corner, water pollution prevention is very critical. Winter brings with it unique and significant pollution concerns to our lakes and rivers. Because the ground will be frozen over the next few months, it acts like a hard surface similar to asphalt or concrete. It no longer has the ability to act like a natural filter.

Pollutants accumulate in snow banks and ice all winter long. Once the snow melts, all the grime, grit, dirt, road salt, and other pollutants are washed into our storm water systems, rivers, and lakes. This seasonal addition of melt water can result in the largest single annual water runoff event in our region and contributes significant amounts of pollutants to sensitive streams and rivers. It's important that we take steps to reduce the amount of potential pollution sources during the winter months.

WINTERTIME STORMWATER POLLUTION PREVENTION



Be stingy with your salt application and consider alternative salting methods.

Road salt can be harmful to plants, aquatic life and drinking water supplies. Salt alternatives like potassium acetate [KA] or calcium magnesium acetate [CMA] are less damaging to homes and landscaping and can be used to de-ice and improve traction on a walkway or driveway. If you do apply salt, shovel first and apply as little as possible.

Correctly calibrate equipment.

Contractors and road crews should correctly calibrate their road salt application equipment. Not only will this benefit the environment by preventing over-application, but it will save northeast Illinois communities thousands of dollars in their road salt allocations.

Rethink rinsing your garage floor.

While it's tempting to take out the hose and wash that ugly, gray sludge and salt off your car and out of your garage on a mild winter day- please stop! Residue left from road salt, oil, gas, and other road pollutants drips from your car and ends up on the garage floor.

Your garage runoff most likely drains into a storm sewer drain, ditch, river, or lake, which means you're flushing pollutants from your garage right into our streams and eventually into the Fox River. One alternative is to clean your car by taking it to a commercial car wash where the drains flow to waste water treatment facilities. A clean car also means a cleaner garage!

Watch your waste.

Picking up pet waste is just as important in the wintertime as it is in the warmer months. Animal waste can be a significant source of harmful bacteria and disease. Cooler temperatures and frozen soil slow down the decay process. When the snow finally does melt, you will have a very unpleasant surprise waiting if pet waste is not removed daily. If you have horses or livestock, don't spread manure in the winter months. Manure is not effective in cold weather and doesn't break down in the soil. It accumulates on the surface and is then washed directly into streams and lakes during thaws, contributing bacteria and excessive nutrients to our surface waters.

Winterize your rain barrel.

Winter freezing and thawing can crack and damage your rain barrel and fixtures. So before the snowflakes begin to fly, disconnect your rain barrel and turn it upside down or bring it inside somewhere warm and dry. Remember to reconnect your downspouts or direct rooftop drainage away from your foundation in a safe and non-erosive manner.

Cover bare soil.

If you are doing earthwork in the winter, remember to maintain your construction site erosion and sediment control practices to keep soil and other pollutants on your site and out of our streams and lakes. Late winter thaws and saturated soil conditions can lead to a very muddy spring. So be prepared and maintain erosion and sediment control practices all winter long and plant winter ground cover on areas with bare soil to prevent soil erosion.