



City of  
**GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS**  
Department of Public Works

189 Wells Street • Greenfield, MA 01301  
Phone 413-772-1528 • [www.greenfield-ma.gov](http://www.greenfield-ma.gov)

Roxann Wedegartner  
Mayor

## **ARE YOU CONNECTED TO THE CITY SEWER SYSTEM?**

### **DO YOU HAVE A SUMP PUMP OR PERIMETER DRAIN IN YOUR BASEMENT THAT DISCHARGES WATER “SOMEWHERE!!!”?**

*If the answers to the above questions are yes, please read the following carefully. If no, please recycle this flyer!*

City Sewer Use Regulations and Massachusetts Plumbing Code prohibit the discharge of groundwater from basements, whether commercial or residential, to the City’s sanitary sewer system. The EPA has recently elevated its level of scrutiny regarding these regulations and ordered the City to step up enforcement of these regulations. The City’s failure to do so will result in fines levied against the City.

*What is the issue with groundwater from my basement going into the sanitary sewer system?*

Discharges to the sanitary sewer system flow to the City’s Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on Deerfield St. The sanitary sewer lines convey water from your toilets, sinks, washing machines and in the industrial sector, process water, that is polluted and must be treated at the WPCP before it can be safely discharged to the Deerfield River. When groundwater and stormwater (rain, snow melt) enter the system it increases operational costs at the plant by increasing the volume of water that needs to be pumped and treated and can, in some cases, decrease the treatment efficiency of the plant. Treating this excess flow will raise operational costs which will result in an increase in sewer use fees. These are the reasons why the Sewer Use Regulations (Art IV Section 1) and the State Plumbing Code (248 CMR 10.17(1)) prohibit such discharge.

*If I can’t discharge the groundwater in my basement to the sanitary sewer system where is it supposed to go?*

Groundwater from basements is not polluted and should be directed to the storm drain system in the street, if one exists, or outside to an area on your property away from the building, roads and sidewalks. The storm drain system is the infrastructure that carries rain water off of the streets. The open gridded catch basins on the sides of streets are connected to the storm drain system. This water does not go to the WPC Plant but rather

to a nearby river, brook or wetland. In Greenfield, most storm water ultimately ends up in the Green River.

*I'm not sure where the water in my basement goes. How can I find out?*

The DPW can assist with this at no charge. Sometimes available plans can answer the question quickly. Often it will be necessary to come to your home or business and look at the piping in the basement. If questions still remain, a small amount of biodegradable dye can be placed in the water and crews can then determine to which system the dyed water flows. Please call the DPW @ 413-772-1528 or email us at [DPW@greenfield-ma.gov](mailto:DPW@greenfield-ma.gov) to arrange for this determination. You can also mail in the tear off contact request form at the end of this flyer.

*When I get water in my basement I just take the cap on the sewer line off to drain the basement. Is this a problem?*

**YES** and a far larger one than violating the City's Sewer Use Regulations! You are putting your property and you and your family's health at serious risk. If there were to be a blockage in the sewer main in the street while you had your cap off, the sewage would back up and flood your basement. Besides the obvious health issue, everything in your basement, including the furnace, washer, dryer etc. will be ruined and you will have no recourse since the cap should never be off your sewer line in the first place. Worse yet, the open cap allows toxic sewer gases (methane, hydrogen sulfide, etc.) to seep into your home. **This is extremely dangerous.**

*If it is determined that the water in my basement does go to the sanitary sewer system what do I do next?*

First you should contact the DPW so they can determine if there is a storm drain system on your street that you can redirect the discharge to. Depending on many factors, the next step may be to hire a plumber to disconnect a roof drain or cellar drain, install a sump pump or simply redirect the discharge from an existing pump. The ideal solution, if available to you, is to redirect the discharge to the storm drain system in the street, which would involve hiring a contractor to run a line from the cellar to the pipe in the street.

*This sounds expensive. Times are difficult. Is there any financial assistance available to accomplish this?*

Yes. The following assistance is available on a first come first serve basis as long as funding is available.

- The City will reimburse building owners up to **\$500** for the installation and/or redirection of a sump pump discharge to an area outside the building. City ordinances prevent the discharge of this water onto sidewalks and roadways. Work must be done by a licensed plumber, pre-approved by the DPW and a final inspection done before reimbursement is made.
- The City will reimburse building owners up to **\$500** to disconnect and redirect roof drains or floor drains out of the wastewater (sewer) system.

- The City will waive all connection and excavation permit fees associated with the work. Building owners are responsible for any required plumbing permit and fee.

Where is this money coming from?

The DPW currently has an annual operating budget of \$7,500 for this financial assistance program. There is no guarantee that this program will continue in future years. The City has received a DEP consent order to eliminate I/I. Multiple studies have confirmed that a substantial portion of groundwater entering our system is coming from basements and roof drains. Therefore, the City is offering this reimbursement program to assist building owners in correcting the problems on their premises. The funding for I/I projects are raised through the City sewer user fees.

I understand the environmental issue and appreciate the financial assistance but it still sounds like a hassle. Why is it in my best interest to do this?

Discharge of storm water to the sanitary sewer system is an illegal connection. Through its Sewer Use Regulations, the City can mandate correction of this problem. Failure to correct the problem can result civil penalties and fines up to \$5000 (Sewer Use Regulations Art. IX Section 2). This is not the course the City wants to pursue, but if the City is facing penalties from EPA it will have no other recourse but to do so. Hence the City is offering financial assistance to help building owners with this problem.

Additionally, the City works with local real estate agents, plumbers and home inspectors to educate them about this problem. Home inspectors will have to inform potential buyers of your property of any illegal connections and lending institutions may have issues financing the purchase of a building that has illegal sewer connections. Therefore, if you are thinking of selling your home in the near future or just want to protect it as a long term investment, it is important to correct any illegal sewer connections.

It is the DPW's desire to assist in correcting these connections in a way that is as easy as possible for building owners. This is why the City has approved the use of City funds for this purpose.

**ACT NOW! FUNDS ARE LIMITED.**

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ cell: \_\_\_\_\_  
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