



## **STORMWATER DRAINAGE AND FLOODING CONCERNS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Many Indianapolis neighborhoods encounter chronic flooding in streets and yards. Over a five-year period, the city logged more than 12,500 stormwater and drainage complaints through the Mayor's Action Center.

The Indianapolis Department of Public Works has developed a Stormwater Master Plan to address flooding and drainage problems in neighborhoods in all nine townships. The plan prioritizes problem areas in order of severity.

Here are answers to frequently asked questions about stormwater drainage and flooding in Marion County.

**Q: Why do my yard and street flood when it rains?**

A: Poor drainage and flooding occur in neighborhoods for several reasons. When open land is developed, stormwater no longer can seep naturally into the ground. Hard surface areas, such as buildings, streets and parking lots, cannot absorb stormwater, and the result is increased stormwater runoff. Also, some home and business owners do not maintain ditches, swales and creeks on their private property. Poor maintenance prevents these drainage systems from working. In addition, neighborhood creeks and ditches can become clogged with debris, lessening their ability to remove stormwater from neighborhoods.



**Q: Why has the city taken so long to address poor drainage in my neighborhood?**

A: The city understands the frustration of those who are waiting for flooding and drainage problems to be resolved. Limited funding is a primary reason the city cannot repair all failing public drainage systems. The city has no authority to correct private drainage problems.

**Q: How is the city paying to fix the problem now?**

A: Addressing neighborhood street flooding and drainage problems is part of the Clean Streams-Healthy Neighborhoods program. Stormwater improvements are funded by the Marion County stormwater utility fee. In 2005, the City-County Council approved a \$1/month increase to the stormwater utility fee to pay for capital projects, operations and maintenance costs for stormwater system improvements. Under the new rates, a single family residential bill of \$1.25 per month has risen to \$2.25 per month.

**Q: How can I find out when the city is coming to my neighborhood?**

A: The Department of Public Works is working to solve flooding and drainage problems across Marion County in order of severity. To see if your project is listed on the Stormwater Master Plan, visit [www.indycleanstreams.org/Documents/plans.htm](http://www.indycleanstreams.org/Documents/plans.htm). If it is not listed, contact the Mayor's Action Center at 327-4MAC(4622) to report a problem and request an investigation of the drainage problems in your neighborhood. All complaints are investigated and prioritized.

**Q: Is standing water a health and safety problem?**

A: Standing water can increase inflow and infiltration of clear water into sanitary sewers, contributing to sewer overflows and backups. Standing water also can prevent septic systems from working properly or delay traffic. During warm weather, standing water can become a breeding ground for insects. In the winter, frozen water on streets can cause black ice and deteriorate pavement, leading to pot holes.

**Q: What is the city's responsibility to ensure proper drainage?**

A: The city ensures proper drainage by:

- Maintaining a Stormwater Master Plan for Marion County watershed drainage improvements.
- Designing and constructing flood control and drainage improvement projects, following the priorities determined by the Stormwater Master Plan.
- Maintaining cross pipes under city streets.
- Establishing and maintaining 50 miles of flood protection levees.
- Removing log jams from major creeks and streams on public property.
- Inspecting private property and ditches for compliance with the Environmental Public Nuisances Ordinance.
- Reviewing, inspecting and issuing permits for development and land alteration plans in compliance with the Stormwater Management and Sediment Control Ordinance.
- Administering the stormwater utility program.

**Q: What is the homeowner's or business owner's responsibility to address drainage problems?**

A: There are more than 10,000 miles of drainage facilities in Marion County. Approximately 6,000

of those miles are on private property and must be maintained by property owners. Residents should:

- Maintain swales and ditches, including roadside ditches, by mowing to 8 inches or less and keeping them free of fill and other debris.
- Work with neighbors to clear brush, debris and other blockages from neighborhood creeks and ditches.
- Use approved rock or concrete for erosion control for creeks that run through private property. Check with the Department of Metropolitan Development, Compliance Division (327-8700) to ensure the specific type of rock or concrete is permissible in waterways.
- Keep storm inlet grates clear of debris, trash and leaves.
- Make sure driveway culverts are free of debris, in good repair and set to proper elevation so that water does not back up.
- Call 327-4MAC (327-4622) to report illegal dumping in waterways.

**Q: Where can I get more information?**

A: For more information on improving stormwater drainage and water quality, go to the Indianapolis Clean Streams-Healthy Neighborhoods Web site at [www.indycleanstreams.org/Help/Residents/drainage](http://www.indycleanstreams.org/Help/Residents/drainage).

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Everyone can help keep common pollutants out of our waterways by adopting these practices:

- Don't over-water your lawn. Water during the cool times of the day, and don't let water run off into a storm drain.
- Reduce the amount of paved area and increase the amount of vegetated area in your yard.
- Clean up your pet's waste. It can end up in our waterways.
- Use a car wash instead of washing your car in your driveway.
- Consider innovative approaches to stormwater management, such as using rain barrels, planting rain gardens or using green roofs.
- Clear trash and debris from storm drains and driveway pipes.
- Dispose of paint, motor oil and cleaning products properly. Call the ToxDrop program at 327-4TOX for more information.