



LAGUNA NIGUEL

Urban Runoff/Pollution Prevention Newsletter

An Update for Laguna Niguel Residents

New Storm Water Permit to Affect All Laguna Niguel Residents, Businesses, Homeowners Associations

Tough new storm water rules will require all residents, businesses and homeowners associations in the City of Laguna Niguel to increase their efforts to keep polluted urban runoff water from entering local creeks and the Pacific Ocean.

In February 2002, the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SDRWQCB) adopted a new five-year Storm Water Permit for the City of Laguna Niguel, our neighboring South County Cities and the County of Orange. The permit imposes many new regulations and restrictions that will require stronger pollution prevention practices by residents and businesses, and limit non-storm water discharges into gutters and storm drains.

The new Storm Water Permit requires the City of Laguna Niguel to:

- Adopt stronger water quality and watershed protection laws, policies and principles
- Prohibit the washing or hosing of driveways and sidewalks
- Impose pollution prevention and treatment requirements on new development projects
- Require existing businesses to implement pollution prevention "Best Management Practices"
- Inspect construction sites, businesses and residential areas to ensure compliance with Permit requirements

- Require Homeowners Associations to employ pollution prevention practices in the maintenance of private streets, gutters, storm drains, parks and open space areas
- Expand urban runoff and water quality public education programs
- Monitor storm drain discharges, and identify and eliminate sources of water pollution

Every resident and business will have to help prevent runoff pollution. Failure to do so may subject the City to enforcement actions by the Regional Board, including heavy fines.



We need your help to protect our creeks and ocean from pollution.

Remember: The ocean begins at your front door!

Residents Urged to Reduce Over-Watering

Over-watering is the main cause of urban runoff. Ideally, if it's not raining, there should not be any water in the gutter or storm drain to transport pollutants to local creeks and the ocean. However, City studies have found that excessive yard watering can send up to *100 gallons per household per day* of urban runoff into the storm drain system. That's a tremendous waste of water and money!

Improperly setting or adjusting your home watering system is one of the major causes of lawn over-watering. Did you know that most home irrigation system controllers are pre-set to run for *10 minutes per station*? Professional gardeners recommend that lawns be watered 1-2 times each day for as few as 1-2 minutes. This is particularly true for Laguna Niguel with our heavier, clay soil conditions.

Please check your sprinkler system and watering practices. If the water flows from the lawn to your driveway or onto the sidewalk or street, the controller should be reset to reduce watering time. Here's a simple approach:

1. Time how long it takes before your lawn starts "shedding" water into the gutter.
2. Set your timer to the last minute before the water started to run off the lawn.
3. Check your controller on a regular basis. If water flows from your yard, the system is over-watering and your timer setting should be adjusted.

Remember: Our gutters and storm drains are for rainwater, not lawn runoff!

Weekend project tips:

1. Check your sprinklers to conserve water and prevent over-watering or runoff.
2. Do not over-apply fertilizers and pesticides.
3. Clean your gutter with a broom.
4. Make sure construction materials do not enter the gutter.

What's the Problem with Urban Runoff?

Urban runoff is a major source of pollution in our nation's rivers, lakes and oceans. Scientists have identified more than 160 chemicals as part of the urban pollution "toxic soup" that enters the storm drain system. These chemicals contaminate the water that washes off yards, sidewalks or driveways into the gutter and storm drain system. These pollutants end up in creeks, beaches and the ocean, carrying potentially harmful viruses and bacteria along with litter, heavy metal particles and other solids.

Two locals creeks — Aliso Creek and San Juan Creek — have been declared "impaired water bodies" by federal regulators due to high bacteria levels. Bacteria levels are regularly monitored in these creeks and at the ocean, and sometimes

exceed federal and state water quality objectives for fishing and swimming. When this happens, warning signs are posted at local beaches such as Aliso Creek State Beach, Salt Creek Beach and Doheny State Beach. Laguna Niguel neighborhoods generate a portion of the urban runoff that carries bacteria and other pollutants to the ocean.

Bacteria may come from many sources such as human waste, sewage, pets and fertilizer. Natural sources such as birds, rabbits, and other species also contribute to the pollution that eventually ends up in the Pacific Ocean.

The goal of all Laguna Niguel residents and businesses must be to stop urban pollution dead in its tracks by keeping runoff from entering gutters and storm drains, and by taking steps to keep these water sources pollution-free.

Adopt Your Gutter, Please!



DO clean your gutter regularly

The City sweeps all residential streets two times per month. Between sweepings, it is not unusual for leaves, dirt, trash or other debris to accumulate in the gutter in front of our homes. Add a little water from excess irrigation, and a whole new mixture is created. We call it “gutter muck,” and it often contains high levels of bacteria.

How do we know that? The City has collected “gutter muck” from the streets and from the waste compartment of street sweepers, and sent it to the laboratory for analysis. The bacteria levels are unbelievably high. Why? Because the “gutter muck” contains fertilizer, domestic and wild animal waste and other sources of bacteria. Rain or excessive urban runoff will carry the “gutter muck” right into the storm drain system between street sweepings.

How can you help? It's easy. *Adopt Your Gutter!* If you observe an accumulation of materials in your gutter between street sweepings, please clean it up with a broom or shovel and properly dispose of it in your trash can. You can also help by moving your cars off of the street on sweeping days.

A little personal responsibility can go a long way in our efforts to reduce water pollution.

Thanks for your assistance!



DON'T over-fertilize your lawn

