

utility update

Summer 2018

columbus.gov/utilities

It's Easy to be a GreenSpot

GreenSpot inspires, educates and recognizes individuals, community groups and businesses that adopt sustainable practices. Are you ready to be inspired? Benefits of joining include ideas to be green, a personal spot on the website to track your green successes, a GreenSpot decal, rebates on rain barrels and native trees/plants (for eligible households), and being part of a larger movement. Are you doing any of the items below? If so, it is easy to be a GreenSpot!



GreenSpot for Individuals

With just three key commitments you can create a more environmentally friendly home. Within each commitment you decide which options fit you best, such as:

changing out your light bulbs to CFL or LEDs, bringing your own bag when grocery shopping, installing low-flow water fixtures. You can even get \$10 off when you purchase an energy efficient showerhead; visit ColumbiaGasOhio.com/GreenSpot.

GreenSpot for Business

Is your business looking for ways to improve air, water and energy quality while reducing waste, pollution and expense? Becoming a GreenSpot Business will help you meet your goals.



GreenSpot for Neighborhoods

GreenSpot Neighborhood is a great way to bring together residents and businesses to make commitments that are

unique for your community. Benefits include ideas for best practices, support from the City to develop your plan, and recognition from the City. Discovery District, Sawmill Place Community, and German Village have made the pledge.



Programs

GreenSpot is made up of many programs including GreenSpot Kids, GreenSpot Schools, Community Backyards, and Neighborhoods. Your business could be eligible to go through GreenSpot's Sustainability Initiative which brings businesses together to share experiences, successes and lessons learned while fulfilling their GreenSpot commitments. Experts will help you improve your business' sustainability. This 6-session class is free.

GreenSpotLight Winners

The GreenSpotLight Awards go to businesses that demonstrate excellence in business practices that produce environmental benefits. Congratulations to the 2018 winners!

*American Municipal Power

*Woolpert, Inc.

*ProSource Flooring, Kitchen and Bath

Share what you've learned and inspire others at facebook.com/columbusgreenspot and on Twitter @GreenSpotCbus. Learn more at www.ColumbusGreenSpot.org!

Protecting Our Water from Backflow

Homes with underground irrigation systems and most non-residential buildings are required by the Division of Water to have a backflow prevention device. These backflow preventers protect the public water system from any potentially contaminated water flowing back into the public system from a customers' plumbing. Some examples requiring backflow systems include: swimming pools, restaurants, medical facilities, laboratories, car washes, automotive shops, industrial sites, and property with a well or pond.

A cross-connection is a physical connection between a possible source of contamination and the drinking water system piping. If the pressure of the source of contamination is greater than the water system pressure, contaminated water may backflow into the drinking water system. Pressure drops in the public water system caused by water line breaks, pump failures, and fire-fighting can also cause a backflow situation. If our rules and regulations require a backflow preventer, it must be tested annually by a tester you hire who is approved by our office. Additional information is on our web site at www.columbus.gov/backflow.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sewer Overflows

What are CSOs and SSOs?

Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are discharges of wastewater and stormwater from the combined sewer system that serves downtown and the surrounding older areas. Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) are discharges of wastewater from the sanitary sewer system. Sewer overflows can occur at various discharge points along local waterways when volume temporarily exceeds capacity, typically during wet weather.

Why do sewer overflows exist?

Many years ago, prior to the existence of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or Clean Water Act, it was a common engineering practice to have such relief points in a sewer system to prevent backups into homes during major rain events.

Are overflows an issue in other cities?

Yes. Most older, large cities also have wet weather management plans and consent orders to solve them.

What is Columbus doing about this issue?

After the city entered into consent agreements with the state in 2002 (SSOs) and 2004 (CSOs), our department developed a 40-year Wet Weather Management Plan. It identified a comprehensive schedule of improvements on the combined and sanitary sewer collection systems and at the two wastewater treatment plants. To specifically target SSOs, Blueprint Columbus was developed to address overflows by lining home sewer laterals, preventing stormwater infiltration. That stormwater is

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Clean streams.
Strong neighborhoods.

then redirected through new downspouts and sump pumps to green infrastructure before filtering into our rivers and streams. For more information about Blueprint Columbus, please visit columbus.gov/blueprint.

How will central Ohio residents benefit?

Anything that improves our environment benefits our community. Solving wet weather issues also reduces sewer backups into basements. If you live in a Blueprint neighborhood, you may be eligible for roof water redirection, lateral lining, and sump pump installation at no direct cost to you.

How are sewer improvements financed?

Sanitary sewer rate revenue and low interest loans fund these infrastructure improvements. The Clean River surcharge you see on your Columbus sewer bill is used to repay the debt incurred on the projects. An affordability analysis was conducted to determine the community's ability to finance the plan, and revenue needs are reviewed annually.

How many are there and where are they located?

There are around 50 locations under Columbus responsibility on various waterways that can discharge. They are along the Olentangy River from Worthington to First Avenue, on the Scioto River from around Neil Avenue to S.R. 104, and on Alum Creek from Main Street to I-70. The locations are marked with signage.

How often do they overflow?

The most active discharge site is on the Scioto River north of State Route 104. This site experiences overflows from both CSO and SSO locations within the collection system during wet weather events. Frequency and volume depend on the amount of rainfall received. Visit eapp.columbus.gov/ssocso/ for more information.

Should residents report overflows and backups?

Yes, please report any overflows or basement backups in Columbus immediately to the 24-hour Sewer Maintenance Operations Center at **614-645-7102** or through 311. Reporting a basement sewer backup promptly is also necessary to determine eligibility for the Project Dry Basement backflow prevention program. If your home is determined to be eligible, an application will be mailed.

If I see an overflow sign, is it safe to swim?

No. First, swimming in Columbus waterways is prohibited by City Code and is considered a drowning risk in some locations due to lowhead dams and utility crossings. Avoid water contact near a marked overflow location, especially following periods of heavy rain. For more information on possible health and environmental effects, please visit the web address above.

Can residents help prevent overflows?

Yes. Please check your downspouts and foundation drains to confirm they are not connected to the sanitary sewer. These outdated connections, common in homes built before 1963, add excess water to the system during rain events and contribute to overflows/basement backups. For instructions on how to disconnect downspouts, please visit our document library at columbus.gov/utilities. If your foundation drain is connected to the sanitary sewer, you may need a sump pump to direct it into the stormwater system. Properly disposing of grease also helps prevent sewer blockages. Place grease in the trash in a sealed container such as a coffee can; do not pour down the drain. Never flush disposable wipes, even those labeled "flushable" because they do not disintegrate and can cause clogs. Additionally, please attend to any needed repairs on your home sewer line.

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