

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4): What are they?

You may have heard about Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4). This program has been in existence since the early 2000's. It was implemented through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) based on the Clean Water Act and is being administered through Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). There are over 900 MS4 municipalities in Pennsylvania. Swatara Township has been classified as one of them with "urbanized areas" which drain to a watershed. The storm water in Swatara drains to a tributary of the Susquehanna River and therefore the Chesapeake Bay. Currently, the Township has been identified with four areas that qualify as MS4 areas. These areas are determined by DEP and they can change them without notice. Please see the map. Swatara Creek has been identified as having high levels of sedimentation resulting from runoff.

Initially, the direction given to municipalities about this program was somewhat fragmented but the Federal and State agencies have found a more concise voice. Municipalities are now able to move forward with greater confidence that our activities will be more compliant than anytime in the past. Municipalities across the state have found that non-compliance with the program requirements is very demanding and very costly. The Environmental Protection Agency start their fines at \$37,500 per day. To date, Swatara has not been found to be non-compliant. Now, with clearer direction, Swatara is working towards increased compliance on all levels. This program is based on six areas of compliance, known as Minimum Control Measures (MCM). Each MCM focuses on a different approach to stormwater management. Those measures are as follows:

MCM #1 – Public Education and Outreach on Storm Water Impacts: As the name suggests the municipalities are tasked with making the residents aware of the program and the requirements; Such as information provided in newsletter articles.

MSM #2 – Public Involvement and Participation: This spring, Swatara Township will be embarking on a new labeling program for inlet boxes which drain to streams within the MS4 areas. If your community group is seeking a fair weather project, do we have a project for you! Please call the Township to reserve an area!

MSM #3 – Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDD & E): Although Swatara has been tasked with reducing sedimentation, we must also be mindful of other discharges. Illicit discharges can be anything determined to be detrimental to aquatic life. They could be chemicals such as paints, thinners, gasoline, and oil; gray water; raw sewage; or even trash. You will see an increased presence of township personnel at inlet boxes and outfalls entering streams. They will be monitoring and testing for any

illicit discharges. If you would happen to see water flowing to or from an inlet which is not clear; has a 'rainbow' sheen; or is colored in any way or the water is emitting an odor, please notify the Township Office at 717-865-4803.

MSM #4 – Construction Site Storm Water Runoff Control: The Township entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Lebanon County Conservation District who oversees the Erosion and Sedimentation (E & S) Controls placed at Construction Sites. However, the Township needs to inspect these areas for compliance. The Township will continue working to educate contractors as to the appropriate implementation of their control measures to ensure the disturbed materials stay on site where they belong.

MSM #5 – Post Construction Storm Water Management in New Development and Redevelopment: These are everyday activities that can include the new garage being built to reminding residents to read the labels on the fertilizer bag to ensure that the appropriate amount is being used on their lawn so that it doesn't flow downstream with the first rain. Every day activities can have a huge impact on storm water management.

MSM #6 – Pollution Prevention Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations: The Township has and will continue to sweep the materials from the roads. Storm water inlets are being monitored and being placed on a clean out rotation schedule. Education measures are being continually reviewed for compliance by Township Staff.

This was a rather brief overview of the program. If you have specific questions or would like to understand the program more, please call the Township Office or attend the monthly Township meeting on the Second Thursday of each month, at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at the Township Building, 68 Supervisors Drive, Jonestown. There is a portion of each meeting dedicated to Storm Water Management. A full overview of the program is also available on DEP's website at:

<http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/MS4>