



Downspout Disconnection Program FAQs

Why is the City making downspout disconnection mandatory?

A Downspout Disconnection Program has started in Grosse Pointe Park. All gutter downspouts must be disconnected from the sewer system of your home, business, or rental property. Recently, the City updated the ordinance to ensure that these disconnections are completed and the downspout disconnection program inspections are ongoing.

Disconnecting downspouts can greatly reduce the amount of stormwater entering the sewer system. It is also an important step in reducing the risk of basement flooding and releasing polluted rainwater into our local waterways.

A downspout is a pipe that carries rainwater/snowmelt from the roof of your home or gutters into the sewer system via a drain pipe connection.

What is a drain pipe connection?

The drain pipe connection is the point where a downspout enters the ground. This typically indicates that the downspout is connected to a pipe that goes to the sewer system that runs under or next to your home, ties into the structure's sewer which leads to the main sewer.

What is downspout disconnection?

Downspout disconnection is the process by which your existing downspout is cut (approximately 9 to 12 inches) above ground level. An elbow and an extension are then added to the downspout in order to divert rainwater and snowmelt onto the ground. The abandoned drain pipe is then capped and sealed. A splash pad may also be attached at the end of the downspout extension to prevent erosion in garden areas and help direct the flow of water.



Do all downspouts on my property need to be disconnected?

Yes, if your home has downspouts that are connected to the sanitary sewer all downspouts must be disconnected, where feasible. Special exceptions can be made and there is a process for appeals listed in Ordinance 226 (See image above)



Downspout Disconnection Program FAQs

Do I need to disconnect my downspout if it flows into a French drain or dry well?

If your downspout drains into a soak away pit, French drain, or dry well, it is likely to have been disconnected from the City's sewer system. These devices direct water from the downspout underground, where the water can easily infiltrate into the ground.

How does disconnecting my downspout help prevent basement flooding?

Disconnecting your downspout from the sewer system helps to reduce the amount of stormwater that is sent through the sewers. Less stormwater in the system will help prevent wastewater from backing up through sewer pipes and floor drains or any other low-lying plumbing fixtures in your basement. Additionally redirecting roof rainwater will result in about 12% reduction of water being handled by the sewer system, thereby reducing flooding. If there is an issue with the storm drainage system piping in your house, you may experience back-up due to a blockage.

My basement has never flooded, why do I need to disconnect my downspouts?

Our systems are designed to handle a certain amount of storm water runoff. Depending on the amount of rainfall and how fast it falls, the sewer and surface drainage systems can be overwhelmed in any area of the City resulting in the risk of basement flooding. When the sewers are overloaded, the water level in the system rises above normal design levels, this condition is referred to as a surcharge. Basement flooding can occur if the home has sanitary fixtures or floor drains below the surcharge level. Disconnecting your downspout(s), where possible, can help reduce flows in our sewer system and reduce your chances of flooding.

How will the ordinance be enforced?

The City is asking all property owners to make every effort to disconnect as many downspouts as is feasible. Properties will be continually audited throughout the program period to ensure compliance. For those properties that are noncompliant, the City may issue a warning notice followed by enforcement through written citation and penalty.

What if I choose not to disconnect? Are there penalties?

If a homeowner does not comply with the requirements of ordinance 226, the City may use its authority under the City Code to enforce compliance. In accordance with the Code, any fine would be determined by the City regarding the appropriate amount and number of violations. The City will not pursue penalties against any homeowner who makes a good-faith effort to disconnect and receives an exemption.

What if it is not technically feasible to disconnect or disconnection would create a hazardous condition?

A property (or downspout) may be eligible for exemptions where the City determines a disconnection is not feasible or creates a hazard. For example, the downspout is located near areas of property where it could be unsafe for water to drain, there is no ground area for drainage, or if downspouts are inside the wall of the structure or backyard



Downspout Disconnection Program FAQs

driveway drains are too difficult to move.

How can I find a City-licensed building contractor professional?

Ask friends, co-workers or neighbors for recommendations of building contractors experienced in the installation of gutters and aluminum products. Always ask these professionals to show you evidence that they are licensed and experienced. The City can recommend local contractors to do the work also, please call the Department of Public Works at 313-822-5100.

Can I disconnect my downspout into a rain barrel?

Your downspout can be directed into a rain barrel during the spring, summer and fall. Overflow from your rain barrel will need to be directed to a safe discharge area. During winter months, your rain barrel should be removed and stored to avoid freezing and breaking. If you do this, an extension should be added to your downspout to ensure proper drainage of water away from your home, when your rain barrel is removed. Rain barrels are available at all Home Depot's, Lowes, Menards, and local Hardware stores. You can also use Google to look at various types of Rain Barrels.

Will I need to relocate my downspouts?

Homeowners may need to consider relocating their downspouts to another location on their property to ensure that water can properly drain. It's best to look at your property carefully, to ensure you have enough area for the water to soak safely into the ground.

Can I get around obstacles and slope problems using basic downspout material?

Yes, you can use a combination of elbows and extensions to help route water away from property lines and pathways to a proper location for the discharge of water.

How long must a downspout extension be?

Depending upon the grade, the downspout should be long enough to convey and discharge water away from structures.

Can I extend downspouts across walkways to grass/garden areas?

Disconnecting your home's downspouts across walkways or pathways should be avoided as it can be a tripping hazard. Make sure that your disconnection is not a hazard for you or anyone else.

Can I run my downspouts overhead above a walkway?

It is not recommended as it may create a safety concern if the downspout freezes and may dislodge.

Can downspout extensions be buried?

Yes, however discharge must flow into an appropriate weeping tile system, into a soak away pit or a dry well drain located well away from the structures foundation and below the frost level. This type of construction requires expertise and should be done by a professional. Always call **"MISS DIG" at "811"** before digging so that utility services can



Downspout Disconnection Program FAQs

be located and marked.

Can I discharge onto paved areas such as my walkway or driveway?

Yes, discharging your downspout directly onto a hard surface such as a walkway or driveway is acceptable. However, you must take the appropriate care to ensure that you mitigate any potentially hazardous condition on your property that can occur. However, no drainage is allowed on any City property. There are various types of diverter options for downspout applications on our website.

How do I apply for an exemption?

In cases where it may not be technically feasible to disconnect your downspout or where disconnection would create a hazardous condition, you can apply to the City for an exemption by reviewing City Ordinance 226.

Department of Public Works City staff shall inspect all homes, businesses, and rentals. Each inspection will be reviewed to determine which, if any, downspouts that are still connected to the sewer system at your home, in accordance to the City ordinance. Once the inspection has been completed, it shall be reviewed by City Staff and inspectors. If there are any issues, you will be notified in writing of the what was found, and what actions need to be taken.

If you have applied for an exemption but have not yet received a decision. Will I face a fine?

No. If you have submitted your appeal application to the City downspout appeals board, you will not face a fine.

What can I do if my neighbors' downspouts are draining onto my property?

Discharge from a downspout should be contained on your property so not to adversely affect or cause damage to a neighboring property. If your neighbors' downspouts carry water onto your property, speak to your neighbor as a first step. You can also contact the City for assistance.

Do I need a City permit to disconnect my downspouts?

No, a Permit is not required to disconnect the downspouts.

Can I perform the work on my own?

Simple disconnections can be performed on your own. The City offers do-it-yourself instructions to guide you through the process. For more complex disconnections that require redirecting or pitching your gutters consider contacting a licensed contractor experienced in installation of gutters and aluminum products.

Where can I get information on disconnecting downspouts myself?

There is Do It Yourself information on the City website. Also, you can find numerous YouTube videos demonstrating downspout disconnections.



Downspout Disconnection Program FAQs

Where should I direct the water flow?

The water from a downspout should flow onto your property and infiltrate into the ground. Never direct the water onto a neighbor's property, a sidewalk, the public walk, City right of way or any area that can cause flooding issues for surrounding properties.

How long does it take to disconnect?

A simple disconnection should take about 15 minutes or less per downspout. If redirecting is required, it can take additional time.

How much will it cost to disconnect?

The cost to disconnect varies from property to property and can depend on the number of downspouts and whether redirecting is required. A simple downspout disconnect can cost as little as \$12 to \$25. However more involved disconnections that include multiple downspouts or those that are done in conjunction with other Best Management Practices (BMP) such as rain-gardens, swales or gutter redirection. In these cases, cost can range from less than \$100 to over \$1,000.

Will the water from my disconnected downspout affect the plants in my garden?

We suggest that you relocate any plants that are not "water-loving" varieties away from an immediate discharge area. Also, you can install a Rain Garden or Bio-Swale for drainage.

How will the extension look?

Take a look around your neighborhood to see examples of disconnections done by your neighbors or consult your local hardware or home improvement store.

Do I need to match existing materials?

You should consider how best to match the extension to the look of your existing downspouts for aesthetic reasons. However, a chemical reaction and corrosion may result when connecting galvanized steel and aluminum.

Do I need to cap the drain connection (hole in the ground)?

Yes, City ordinance requires that all disconnections are sealed with cement or cap and adhesive to provide a permanent disconnection from the sanitary sewer. Further, the cap and seal prevent water and debris from going in and also stops animals from falling into the opening.

How do you cap the drain connection (hole in the ground)?

If the pipe into the ground is a plastic type (i.e., PVC), you can glue the cap to the top of the existing pipe. For clay or cast-iron pipe connections, you will need to fill drain tile with concrete (stuff with paper or rags prior to prevent clogging or damaging sewer) or internal expanding plug can be installed or specially made cap from hardware or home improvement store.



Downspout Disconnection Program FAQs

What if the downspout extension crosses a walkway?

Your downspout can be directed under your walkway to a pop-up drainage emitter during the spring, summer or fall, if the walkway is not normally used in the winter. Your pop-up drain emitter will need to discharge to a safe discharge area. During winter months, the flow should be diverted from a popup drain emitter to a downspout extension to ensure proper drainage.

What is a pop-up drainage emitter?

A pop-up drainage emitter is a device used to allow rain water to discharge onto a grassed area from an underground pipe connected to a downspout. The piping is typically installed under a removable interlocking pathway which is adjacent to the building. The emitter is opened by water pressure, when water flows from the downspout through the drain onto the grass area.



How do I deal with downspout extensions that interfere with outdoor property maintenance?

In situations where you do not want to relocate downspouts to areas of your property because the extensions interfere with outdoor maintenance, use a hinged-elbow downspout. These can be folded up and out of the way while you are working (e.g., mowing your lawn) and then placed back down for regular use.