



# Storm Water Quality

## WHAT IS STORM WATER QUALITY?

The health of our environment is reflected in the quality of our waterways. Although water quality throughout the nation has improved drastically over the last few decades, basic uses such as fishing or safe swimming can still not safely be supported by one-third of our nation's waterways. And, the streams and



bayous in Harris County fare worse than the national average! In an effort to improve water quality, we look at both point sources, such as wastewater treatment plants, and non-point sources, such as storm water runoff. The impact that storm water has on overall water quality has only recently been recognized, but the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) believes that without addressing urban storm water runoff, we cannot achieve healthy waterways. As a result of this recognition, the EPA now requires large cities and counties to become responsible for keeping the quality of storm water as clean as possible.

Storm water is a natural

occurrence. Although the water falling from the sky is generally clean, as it runs over the ground it picks up litter and other pollutants. Storm water runoff flows into the storm drain or ditch and then directly to our bayous, lakes, and ultimately Galveston Bay. STORM WATER RECEIVES NO TREATMENT. For this reason, we have to be very aware about keeping our storm water clean.

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### STORM WATER RECEIVES NO TREATMENT

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We all have an impact on the quality of our runoff. Many common, everyday events can lead to storm water pollution. Throwing out a piece of paper or wrapper, pouring chemicals into the storm drain in front of a house, over-fertilizing, and blowing grass clippings and leaves into the storm drain or street all contribute to water pollution.

As Houstonians, we are very well aware of flooding issues surrounding the quantity of storm water. Let's now recognize the

importance of the quality of storm water.

So, until next time, let's think of what we can do on an individual basis to improve storm water quality.

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# Storm Water Inlet Marking Program

## SWIM Program Open for Business!



**From Rain to Runoff** - Urban storm water runoff can be contaminated with pesticides, fertilizers, animal droppings, trash, food waste, automotive by-products and other toxins. The runoff is not treated and carries pollutants through the drainage and storm sewer system directly into our bayous and

channels. Once the storm runoff hits the local waterways, natural resources can be damaged. For example, oil and grease deplete oxygen in the water, causing fish to suffocate.

**The SWIM Program** - Harris County and the City of Houston are taking positive steps to keep water and local waterways healthy and clean with the Clean Water Act and community education, such as the Storm Water Inlet Marking (SWIM) Program.

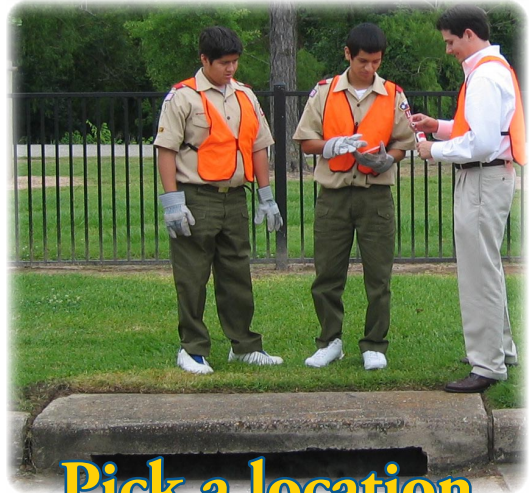
**Make Your Mark** and Volunteer for SWIM. The SWIM program is an environmental public education program sponsored by Harris County and the City of Houston. The program's goal is to raise awareness of storm water locations and issues, and encourage residents

**Do not put anything into the storm sewer openings**

to protect water resources. Potentially every storm drain in Harris County will be marked to deter residents from dumping trash and chemicals into the waterways. The program is open to any individual, group or community that would like to help mark the storm drains and sewer openings. To help, obtain information and order SWIM program kits, visit [www.CleanWaterClearChoice.org](http://www.CleanWaterClearChoice.org) or call 713-290-3000.

### How to Keep the Water Flowing Safely

- Do not put anything into the sewer openings. It's that simple; no grass, leaves, oil, chemicals — Nothing.



**Pick a location**



**Place an inlet Marker**

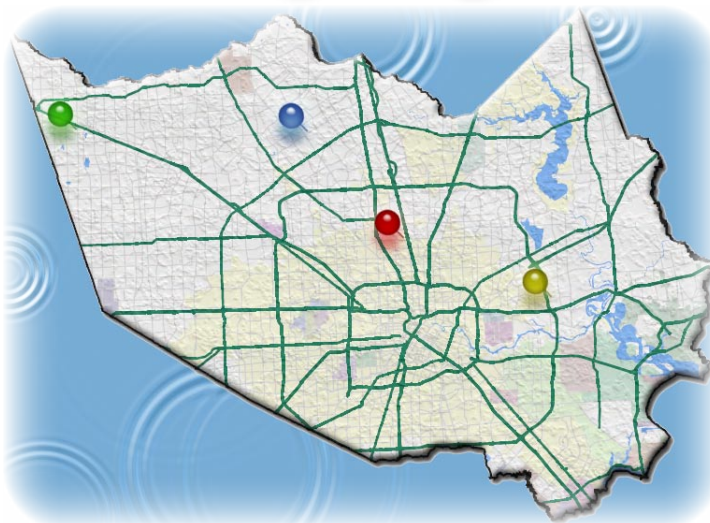


**Protect the environment**



# Household Hazardous Waste

## Time for Spring Cleaning!



Harris County has scheduled four Spring 2005 Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Events:



March 12th Harris County HHW Collection Event from 8 AM – 2 PM:  
Hockley Community Center, 28515 Old Washington Rd, Hockley, TX 77447



April 9th Harris County & North Channel LEPC HHW Collection Event from 9 AM - 3 PM:  
Galena Park ISD, 14705 Woodforest Blvd, Houston, TX 77015



April 23rd Harris County HHW Collection Event from 8 AM – 2 PM:  
Pct 1 North Service Center, 11801 West Hardy Rd, Houston, TX 77076



April 30th Harris County HHW Collection Event from 8 AM – 2 PM:  
Barbara Bush Library, 6817 Cypresswood Drive, Spring, TX 77379

The purpose of these events is to provide Harris County residents with a convenient location for the safe disposal of various household contaminants in order to keep these hazardous materials from entering our local waterways. Items that will be accepted include: Oil & Latex Paint, Aerosols, Household Cleaners, Stain and Varnish, Pesticides, Fertilizers, Lawn Care Products, Solvents, Motor Oil/Automotive Fluids, Car Batteries, Household Batteries, Pool Chemicals, Fuels, Automobile Tires (limit 5 per household). This event will also accept used electronics such as televisions, computers, word processors, printers, scanners, fax machines, telephones and cellular phones, VCRs, stereos and other small personal electronics.



**Items that will NOT be accepted include:** commercial waste, medical waste, radioactive waste, PCBs or dioxins, ammunitions or explosives, compressed gas cylinders, microwaves, washers or dryers, refrigerators or freezers, air conditioners, photocopier machines, or smoke detectors.

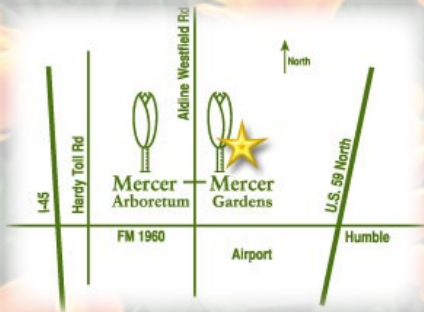
A mercury thermometer exchange will also take place in conjunction with the collection event. Citizens can bring their old mercury fever thermometers for proper disposal and receive a free, non-toxic replacement.

# Learn to be YardWise!

YardWise is a **FREE** annual course available to all Harris County residents interested in learning more about proper yard care and ways that they can help reduce the amount of yard chemicals entering our local waterways.

The course participants will attend 7 hours of classroom sessions and field instruction featuring lectures, slides, videos, and hands-on demonstrations covering such topics as:

**Backyard Composting** - Correct Application of Lawn Chemicals - **"Don't Bag It" Plan** - Integrated Pest Management - **Less Toxic Alternatives** - Mulching & Grasscycling - **Vermi-Composting** - WaterSmart - **Xeriscaping**



**9 AM - 5 PM, Saturday, April 2, 2005**  
Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens  
Visitor Center Classroom  
22306 Aldine Westfield Road  
Humble, TX 77338-1071

If you are interested in participating in the YardWise Program, please contact Jon-Paul Komar by March 28, 2005. If you have additional questions call 713-290-3000 or e-mail [jkomar@swq.hctx.net](mailto:jkomar@swq.hctx.net). Class size is limited.

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[www.CleanWaterClearChoice.org](http://www.CleanWaterClearChoice.org)

