



Kitsap County Public Works
614 Division Street (MS-26)
Port Orchard, WA 98366

Prepare Your Home Before it Rains

For immediate release September 21, 2004

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— NEWS RELEASE —

Subject: Prepare Your Home Before it Rains
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Prepare Your Home Before it Rains

“Winter-season temperatures will be milder than normal, on average, with above-normal rainfall and below-normal snowfall.” “The stormiest periods will occur in mid-November, late December, early January, and early and mid- to late February.” These quotes are from The Old Farmer’s Almanac’s long-range weather forecast for the Pacific Northwest. Is your home ready for the winter rains?

Kitsap County Public Works Surface and Stormwater Management (SSWM) Program has some tips for homeowners to better prepare their homes for this type of forecast. “We perform regular, routine maintenance of publicly owned stormwater systems to minimize runoff related problems” said David Tucker, Kitsap County SSWM Program Manager. “We also need homeowners to check and maintain drainage systems on their property to ensure that they are ready for the worst of the winter weather.” Here are a few suggestions that will help get homeowners started.

Identify your stormwater system. Follow gutters and downspouts to see where they drain. Homeowners need to make sure these systems are clean and operating properly. Items needing attention typically include gutters, downspouts, storm drains and underground piping. Inspect these systems late in the fall after leaves have dropped and again in mid-winter at a minimum. Consider the impact of drainage from your property on neighboring downstream areas. Avoid the creation or aggravation of problems like landslides, erosion of steep slopes, or flooding, which can result in legal problems if neighboring properties are damaged.

If homeowners located in unincorporated Kitsap County are unsure of what type of stormwater system they have, they may be able to obtain information from the county. Contact Kitsap County’s Open Line at 360-337-5777 and ask for Surface and Stormwater Management. Records are available on most homes recently built within developments. Information on older homes may or may not be available. For new construction, make sure to ask the builder for information on all the underground structures around the house (stormwater systems, septic drain field, curtain drains, foundation drains, etc.)

Clean the gutters. One of the best ways to prepare for the winter rains is to clean the gutters that run along the roof line of the house. These gutters can fill with debris like leaves and pine needles that keep water from flowing in the intended direction. If water runs down the outside of the gutter or drips down onto the ground instead of going to the downspout, the gutter probably needs to be cleaned.

While cleaning the gutters, check to see if there are any leaks or broken sections. Leaking or broken gutters can allow water to drain down the side of the house and lead to the growth of moss, possible siding damage, flooding of crawl spaces or basements, wood rot, and saturated

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soils. Because of the types of trees in this area, gutters may need to be cleaned several times a year. Plan ahead and clean gutters on dry days to avoid cleaning in rainstorms.

Keep storm drains clear. Storm drains collect water and transport it downstream to the next stormwater system, to a detention or retention pond, or to a receiving body of water. If the grate on top of a storm drain becomes cluttered with debris like leaves, pine needles, or garbage, the water cannot flow into it and will end up pooling on top. This can lead to flooded yards, roadways, garages or even houses. Check storm drain grates periodically, especially during rainstorms, to see if debris that could restrict flow has collected on the grate. If so, use a yard rake to remove the debris. If this does not help, contact the Kitsap County Open Line. ***NEVER REMOVE THE LID OR CLIMB INTO A CATCH BASIN.*** If the grate is clean, but water is still pooling after the rain has stopped or if you are concerned about property damage, contact the Kitsap County Open Line at 337-5777 to request additional assistance. For after hour emergencies, contact 911.

Keep driveway culverts clear. Driveway culverts connect the open ditches on either side of a driveway by allowing water to flow under, rather than over, the driveway. They should not be filled in or paved over. Keep these culverts clear of rocks and debris to avoid flooding. If the culvert is filled with debris that cannot be reached, the County Public Works Department may be able to provide some assistance.

Maintain Your Infiltration System. The downspouts on many homes in unincorporated Kitsap County are connected to an infiltration system. These systems are intended to reduce runoff by allowing it to soak into the ground. Infiltration systems normally consist of a leach field preceded by one or more catch basins. An infiltration leach field is similar to a septic drain field and is usually made of perforated pipe and washed drain rock. If large amounts of sediment, leaves, and fir needles are washed into the leach field it will eventually plug and fail. Removal of floatable materials and sediment from the catch basin(s) upstream of the leach field is the best way to ensure that the infiltration system continues to function. Like a septic drain field, an area used as a leach field should not be parked on or driven on since it will compact the soils and reduce the effectiveness of the system.

Kitsap County performs regular maintenance on stormwater systems within the roads and in residential areas where easements have been provided. In 2004, Kitsap County's SSWM Program maintained and inspected 484 stormwater control facilities, 9,900 catch basins, and 220 miles of piping throughout unincorporated Kitsap County. Unfortunately, crews cannot be in every neighborhood every day. Citizens can help by observing stormwater facilities near their home and contacting the Public Works Department at 360-337-5777 if they identify a problem.

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