

KALAMAZOO DRAIN KEEPERS



Department of Public Services

Hazardous Waste 101



When cleaning a storm drain for the **Adopt-A-Drain Program (AADP)** you may encounter several categories of waste. For safety reasons, do not forget to wear gloves and proper personal protection equipment (PPE), bring bags and containerize the waste.

In most cases **non-hazardous** items are present. These are generally sediment/dirt, brown leaves, trash, sticks/twigs, grass and/or green leaves, salt, snow/ice, pet waste, or other non-harmful items. Learn more at ProtectYourWater.net/Adopt-A-Drain-Program/.

However, there are times when categories of **HAZARDOUS WASTE** exists. Never handle hazardous, chemical or medical waste. If you are uncertain what category of waste is present, **do not touch or pick up these items**.

Report hazardous waste items to your local public safety. **Dial 911** for assistance if medical wastes, drugs, hazardous substances or other similar items are discovered. Again, do not touch or pick up these items. For non-emergencies, report these items to the City of Kalamazoo at **311** (when in the City) or **269-337-8000** (if outside the City).



Best Practices

Unfortunately, many substances, liquids or solids, and trash are found in storm drains. How they got there may be accidental or intentional. ***When encountering or suspecting hazardous waste in a drain, safety is paramount.*** The City of Kalamazoo emphasizes that direct handling by volunteers is strictly prohibited, and immediate reporting to authorities is the primary action. Refer to the **BEST PRACTICES 101 GUIDANCE**.



Here are safety tips on handling hazardous waste found in a drain:

1. Do Not Touch or Attempt to Handle Hazardous Waste:

- Never handle hazardous or medical waste, including hypodermic needles, drugs, prescription medicines, hazardous substances, automotive fluids, unknown fluids, or other similar items.
- Do not touch or pick up these items.
- Do not stick hands in between the grate while cleaning.
- Never attempt to remove the drain grate. Your responsibility is only to clear debris from the surface of the drain grate and the area around it.

2. Immediately Report the Discovery:

- Report items to your local public safety. Dial 911 for assistance if medical wastes, drugs, hazardous substances, fuel spills, or other similar items are discovered.
- Notify your utility owner or Department of Public Services (or designated City staff) if you discover items that are hazardous, suspect illegal dumping, or encounter other issues you are unable to handle.

- For non-emergencies, report these items to the City of Kalamazoo at 311 (when in the City) or 269-337-8000 (outside the City). When reporting, be prepared to provide information such as the location of the incident, the material name/type, the amount, the container size, the problem (leak, spill, fire), dangerous properties of the materials, and the number of persons injured or exposed.

3. Prioritize Your Safety and Stop Work:

- ***If you are uncomfortable clearing a drain for any reason, STOP.*** Do not take ANY RISKS. This applies to discovering hazardous materials.
- Work with a partner always and be aware of your surroundings, watching for traffic and hazards.
- Do not clear your drain during storms or if the pavement is slippery, badly broken up, or the area around the drain is collapsing. Hazardous materials might be obscured or made more dangerous by these conditions.
- Avoid standing or crouching on busy streets. If on a busy road, clear only from the sidewalk and leave the street area for City staff.
- Do not enter ponding water, as it could obscure hazardous materials or other dangers.
- Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at all times.

4. Understand What Constitutes Hazardous Waste in this Context:

- Hazardous materials are broadly defined as substances that may pose unreasonable risks to health, safety, property, or the environment. This includes toxic, ignitable, corrosive, and reactive materials.
- Common items that can become hazardous waste in stormwater include, but are not limited to, motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, paint, fuels, coolants, chemicals, and street litter containing these or unknown substances.
- Even in the "first flush" of runoff water, the initial surge of stormwater, can carry a high concentration of accumulated oils, grease, and lead.
- Medical waste and hypodermic needles ("sharps") are specifically identified as hazardous and require extreme caution.

5. Proper Disposal of Non-Hazardous Waste:

- While not directly about hazardous waste handling, it's important to know that collected non-hazardous debris (leaves, trash, recyclables) should be properly sorted and disposed of according to local guidelines and not kept at your residence or left by the drain unless immediate removal is planned. Sediment collected in the spring, especially, may contain chemicals from winter deicers and should typically go in the trash or be handled by City street sweepers.