

Catch Basin Care

What are catch basins?

Catch basins are the grated storm drains that you see on almost every street corner. They are storm sewer inlets - typically located next to street curbs - that are the entryway from our streets to our sewer system or stormwater facilities and represent the first step in stormwater collection and disposal. On rainy days, rainwater and anything else on the streets enter catch basins.

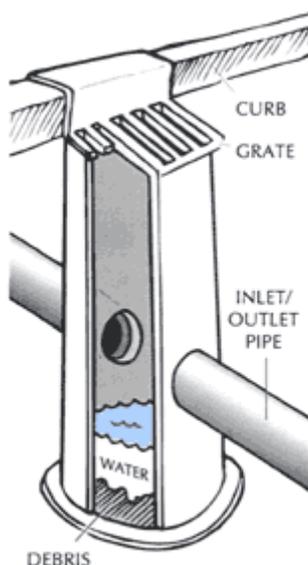
How do catch basins get clogged?

Catch basins have grids to prevent large objects from falling into the sewer system. However, the bars are fairly widely spaced so that the flow of water is not blocked. Consequently, many objects fall through.

What are the consequences of clogged catch basins?

When catch basins get clogged with recently fallen leaves and debris, water can no longer be drained from the street. Water ponds along streets and can flood intersections and homes. Localized street flooding can be a hazard to the traveling public.

Contrary to popular belief, pet wastes, oil and other materials dumped into catch basins do not always go to the wastewater treatment plant, but instead may flow directly into streams and rivers. For example: dumping oil into a catch basin can have almost unthinkable consequences. If it reaches a river, lake, or stream, five quarts of oil can create a slick as large as two football fields and persist on mud or plants for six months or more.



It is important to monitor and clean catch basins to prevent street flooding, property damage, and hazards to the traveling public.

How can you help keep catch basins clean?

To lessen street flooding, the City asks residents to help clean the inlets and catch basins near your house or business. The grates of catch basins can become clogged with leaves or litter, especially in the fall and winter. Regularly inspect the grate and remove debris.

Stand on the curb and use a rake or pitch fork to clear leaves, limbs, and debris from the catch basin. Do not attempt to remove the grate, only the debris on top of the grate. Dispose of the debris properly.

The best time to inspect the catch basin in front of your house or business is prior to a rain event. Monitor and clean the catch basin in the fall when the trees are shedding their leaves. When the forecast calls for heavy rainfall or snow and ice, remove debris from the catch basin before a storm. After a storm, maintain the openings to catch basins by clearing away any snow or ice. Create a 10 to 12-inch path along the curb for melting snow and ice to drain to the catch basin.

Disposing of leaves and debris

When you are clearing your sidewalk or driveway, dispose of waste in trash receptacles instead of sweeping it into the gutters or catch basins. Please do not rake or blow the leaves from your yard into the street. The City's leaf removal service is intended solely for leaves that impede stormwater drainage and cause traffic hazards. Dispose of leaves and yard debris in curbside yard debris containers.

Getting help

If you see a catch basin filled with debris below the grate, or if you cannot clear the basin near your property yourself, call **503-823-1700**. Never attempt to remove catch basin grates, only the debris on top of the grate.

Managing stormwater in Portland

The federal Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and Endangered Species Act direct the City of Portland to improve stormwater quality and protect watersheds, rivers, streams and drinking water resources. With the exception of catch basin maintenance, the overall management of the stormwater system is the responsibility of the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES).¹

The Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) is responsible for maintaining catch basins and responding to street flooding and other safety concerns. The infrastructure includes 456 miles of stormwater sewer pipe, 878 miles of combined sewer pipe (carries both stormwater and sewage), 58,000 catch basins, 9,000 sumps, and 4,700 miles of streets. PBOT also maintains 351 trash racks, 141 miles of ditches, and 23 miles of culverts.

Given the City's limited budget and staff and the size of the infrastructure, PBOT relies heavily on citizen involvement to help keep streets safe and catch basins clean and to notify the City if a higher level of maintenance is needed at a particular location.

How you can help keep catch basins clean

The following simple actions can help keep streets open and catch basins clean:

1. Monitor and clean the catch basin near your house or business, especially prior to a rain event and after a snow and ice event.
2. Stand on the curb and use a rake or pitch fork to clear leaves and debris from catch basins so that water can drain easily. Do not try to remove the grate.
3. Do not rake or blow leaves from your yard into the street. Bag them at the curb in the parking strip and prepare them for curbside pickup by your garbage hauler.
4. For leaves that have already fallen on the street, rake them 10 to 12 inches from the curb, allowing water to flow to the catch basin without the leaves.
5. Dispose of waste in trash receptacles instead of sweeping it into the gutters or catch basins. Dispose of leaves and yard debris in curbside yard debris containers. Pile shoveled snow where it can be absorbed into the ground.
6. Notify the City at 503-823-1700 if you cannot clear a catch basin yourself.

¹ BES coordinates the citywide response to the federal stormwater permit that requires the City to reduce stormwater pollution, and oversees programs that respond to water quality requirements.