ILLEGAL CONNECTIONS OF SUMP PUMPS

A sump pump discharge line that's hooked up to the city sanitary sewer (sewer) is illegal and in general is not a good idea. I will explain the reasons, why you should care, and what you can do instead.

I bet the first thing you thought after reading that pumping sump water into the sewer system was illegal, your first thought was "Why? It's just water!" and I'm sure plenty of people share the same thought. But it *isn't* just water; when it comes to this issue, we must think of groundwater and city water (the water that comes out of your tap) differently.

The storm drain system, designed for groundwater/rainwater, is separate from the sewer system, doesn't go through a wastewater treatment facility (WWTP), and flows directly into the nearest body of water. Because of this, the sewer system and its wastewater treatment facilities are designed only to handle the demands of daily city water usage in the city's homes and businesses.

If you're a homeowner with a basement or crawl space, you're likely aware of the large amount of water your sump pump has to handle during a storm. If your pump is discharging to the sewers, that's a sizable amount of extra gallons pouring into the sewers in a short amount of time. Now imagine if sump pumps all over the city were discharging to the sewers-- during a storm, that would be *thousands* of gallons of extra water pouring into the system all at once. The sewer system and wastewater treatment facilities would quickly fill to over-capacity and easily flood during a period of heavy rainfall, causing either the sewers to back up into homes or the wastewater treatment plant to release partially treated sewer water into local streams and rivers (ew). A large increase of water to the WWTP also increases the cost to operate the wastewater facility and as you know sewer bills are already high.

One average sump pump can pump about 45 gallons per minute. If the same sump pump runs for 10 minutes every 30 minutes it would pump about 21,600 gallons per day. In this scenario, it would only take 16 of these sump pumps to reach the treatment capacity of the WWTP.

If that doesn't convince you, here's another reason: A main drain/sewer clog is a fairly common problem, especially in yards with trees, and it usually happens without warning. If your main sewer suddenly stops flowing properly, it can back up into your toilets, bathtub, and sinks. The last thing you'd want in that kind of situation is a sump pump pouring gallons and gallons of additional water into the clogged sewer! You can turn off your water until you can get the sewer cleared, but you can't turn off your sump pump without risking a flood.

No one wants sewage backing up into their home, so if your sump pump is currently hooked up to the sewer, get that fixed!