

Gray Water

Any wastewater (whether it comes from the shower, toilet, or from the laundry) poses a risk to public health as well as the environment. One particular type of wastewater generated from the home is called gray water. Gray water is the wastewater produced by activities in the home such as dish washing, laundry, and bathing. Gray water does not include water from toilets, which is called black water.

Gray water is water that has been used; it has bacteria, disease causing organisms, and/or chemicals that make it unsafe to be discharged untreated. Accordingly, gray water is considered sewage, and is bound by the same regulatory requirements as black water. Therefore, it is required to be tied into the septic system.

Two questions are regularly asked about gray water:

1. Can I run my washing machine water out to the ditch and bypass my sewage system? No. All domestic sewage must be directed into the sewage system including all gray water discharges such as washing machines, dishwashers, sinks, showers, etc. Only clear water basement sumps (that do not receive waste or gray water) can be discharged.

2. I live in an older home that was designed to have the gray water discharge to the storm sewer. Is my plumbing grandfathered in, or am I required to tie my gray water into my septic system? No, it is not grandfathered in. Regardless of the regulations at the time of construction, you cannot discharge any gray water or black water to the storm sewer system, onto the surface of the ground, or anywhere else besides a septic system or sanitary sewer.

Gray water can be a hazard to public health and also the environment if allowed to be discharged untreated. If you have any questions about gray water please contact the Stark County Health Department at (330) 493-9904.