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New hotline open to help prevent stormwater pollution

Beginning today, the city has opened a hotline for citizens to report stormwater pollution. The hotline is another way the city is raising awareness of the city's new stormwater regulations, which went into effect in November, 2009. The new regulations outline what should not be discharged into the storm drainage system, including chemicals, yard debris and pet waste.

Citizens can make reports to the new Stormwater Pollution Prevention Hotline number at 341-1020 or on the web at wilmingtonnc.gov/reportstormwaterpollution.

Fines for violating the new regulations range from \$250 up to \$10,000. According to Public Services Director Richard King, the purpose of the new regulations is to help keep local waterways clean, with the hotline just one way the city is trying to raise awareness of the new requirements.

"We're not focused on giving out fines, we're focused on helping citizens and business owners understand what the new requirements are and how illegal dumping harms our local waterways," King said.

Examples of violations:

- Wastewater piped to a creek or ditch (i.e. from a washing machine or floor drain);
- Businesses such as car lots and pressure washing companies that use chemicals to wash equipment outdoors and allow the wash water to flow into a storm drain, ditch, or waterway;
- Sediment flowing off a construction site;
- Draining or pouring auto fluids (motor oil, antifreeze, brake fluid, etc) or chemicals on the street (mopwater, rinsing garbage cans, etc.) or into a storm drain;
- Dumping yard waste or other debris into a storm drain. Currently, debris such as lawn clippings or pine straw is often blown into streets, storm drains, or ditches, which contributes to flooding.

Citizens are also asked to report storm drains, ditches, creeks or ponds that appear to have foam, bubbles or strong odors. Reports of illegal discharges will be investigated by the city's Public Services Department.

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For more information, contact Public Information Officer Malissa Talbert at 342-2736 or 470-8720.