

# Public Works Community Update on Stormwater Management



Hamilton  
Public Works

# Hamilton's Storm Event Response Group



Kenilworth Ave. underpass

Over the last three years, Hamilton has experienced numerous significant rainfall events that left parts of the City flooded. The City is committed to assessing, analyzing and implementing storm management improvements where possible and continues to be proactive in its approach. That is why the City has formed the Storm Event Response Group (SERG); a group composed of City staff with multi-disciplinary backgrounds. The group includes representatives from many divisions across the City, including Wastewater, Capital Planning & Implementation, Operations and Maintenance and Risk Management, who are committed to enhancing the City's storm event preparation and response.

In September 2005, City Council directed staff to establish an Independent Community Panel whose mandate was to address the causes and effects of inclement weather on the storm management and drainage systems in Hamilton. The Panel members consisted of experts from the fields of Wastewater Engineering, Watershed Planning, Stormwater Management, Climate Change and Water Management, Insurance Issues and Landscape Management. The Panel's final report provided 26 key recommendations in the following areas:

1. Technology, Engineering and Design
2. Urban Design and Planning
3. Communications Plan
4. Policy and Implementation

The SERG committee meets regularly to ensure that these recommendations are being implemented.



## Flood Aware Program

It is necessary to assume that these severe storm events will occur again and that plans and actions are necessary to avoid and minimize their effects. While we cannot prevent severe storm events in Hamilton, we are committed to helping residents prepare for and prevent potentially devastating effects from storms and associated flooding. As part of this commitment, SERG has implemented a flooding preparedness program, called Flood Aware, to educate our community and heighten awareness about measures homeowners and business owners can take to protect their property in preparation for significant rainstorms.

The City is actively implementing many initiatives to better manage stormwater flows and evaluating our existing and future infrastructure needs. Numerous storm drainage studies are currently being conducted across the City to investigate and better understand the causes of flooding problems. At the same time we are reaching out to our community to provide tips for flood prevention and response so that individuals can take the necessary precautions as well.

In the coming months, as part of this Flood Aware preparedness program, we will be providing valuable flooding preparedness information through community information sessions, helpful guidebooks, the City's Web site and media channels.

## Mother Nature is unpredictable

### Flood Protection Tips

Unfortunately, no one can be 100 per cent certain that their home will not flood. There are, however, many precautionary measures a homeowner can take to avoid or minimize flood damages.

- Do not store items on the floor in your basement. Consider installing shelves several feet off the floor to store.
- Do not sit appliances, furnaces and water heaters directly on the floor in your basement. If possible they should be set on a stable platform of appropriate material such as cement blocks.
- Install electrical outlets and electrical panels higher than a projected flood level.
- Do not run drywall all the way to the floor in a finished basement – use material such as tile or linoleum running up the wall about one foot high to guard against water damage.
- Consider the installation of protective plumbing

devices such as backflow preventers or sump pumps. Contact the City's Building Department for permitted methods in your area.

- Ensure that sewer laterals are functioning properly through regularly scheduled maintenance.
- Consider disconnecting roof leaders from the sewer system. Do this only if it is determined that neighbouring properties will not be adversely affected. Contact the City's Building Department before proceeding.
- Complete a comprehensive inventory of your possessions supported by photographic and/or video documentation in the event that you may need to submit an insurance claim for water damage.



## Do your part

### Help prevent flooding in your neighbourhood

- Leaves and yard waste that are left to pile up in the roadway, ditches or sidewalks can clog catch basins and prevent the free flow of water. Check your waste calendar for Leaf and Yard waste collection dates in your neighbourhood.
- When outdoors, dispose of your garbage properly. If you litter, a build-up of debris can create blockages within the sewer system.
- If you see larger debris on the roadway, please call 905-546-CITY (2489) to have City workers remove and dispose of it in a safe manner.
- When landscaping your property, be sure that you don't change the lot grading. Water should flow away from your home, not towards it.
- Minimize the amount of hard surface such as concrete driveways and walkways on your property. Rainfall should be absorbed into the ground. When this is prohibited by hard surfaces, water will flow in the most natural direction.
- Gardens, plant material and trees absorb water.
- Maintain the swale on your property. The swale is

usually located on the property line between properties. A swale is a shallow trough-like depression that carries water during rainstorms or snow melts.

- Keep your eavestroughs clean. When your eavestroughs are blocked, the rain will pour over the edges landing on the ground next to your home. If you have cracks in the concrete wall of your basement or problems with your weeping tile, this water could enter your home.
- Rain barrels help to direct water away from your home and the sewer system. The downspout from your eavestrough is directed into the rain barrel. You can run a hose from the rain barrel to your water garden.
- Don't pour grease such as bacon or hamburger fat down the sink and into the sewer system. The grease may stick to the sides of your sewer pipe or the City's sewer pipe. Over time, this could build up and create blockages within the system. The disposal of grease into a sewer system is a violation of the Sewer Use By-law.

## Insurance Recommendations

There is no such thing as a standard homeowners or tenant's insurance policy. Coverage may vary from insurer to insurer, so it is important to have your insurance representative explain the coverage to you in detail before you agree to it.

Generally speaking, surface flooding or water which finds its way into your dwelling through a window well, doorway, or cracks in your foundation is not something that is covered by most home insurance policies. Flooding from a sewer backup through a drain in your dwelling may be covered if your policy has a sewer backup clause. You may need to pay an additional premium for sewer backup coverage. Again, talking to your insurance representative and understanding all of your insurance options is the most important step.

## Process for making a Property Damage Claim with the City of Hamilton

If you have incurred property damages for which you believe the City may be responsible, it's your right to make a claim with the City. The Municipal Act requires that you

notify the City in writing of your claim. In Hamilton, your claim for property damage can be mailed or faxed to:

City of Hamilton, Risk Management Section  
21 King Street West  
Hamilton, ON L8P 4W7  
FAX: 905-540-5744  
PHONE: 905-546-2424, ext. 5742

Every claim submitted to Risk Management will receive a full investigation. Once the investigation is complete, you will be advised of the City's position with respect to liability. You may be fully or partially compensated, or your claim may be denied with a corresponding explanation.

Please note that payment of a claim is contingent upon the City being found legally liable. The City will not be held

responsible for your costs unless there is evidence that the City committed a negligent act or omission which resulted in the damages.

Like most Canadian municipalities, the City of Hamilton only compensates when it is legally liable for the damage sustained. The approach helps reduce costs for the taxpaying public, who ultimately bear the cost when claims are paid.

Please contact the Risk Management general inquiry line at 905-546-2424, ext. 5742 with any questions you may have about the claims process. More information about the Risk Management section and the claims process can be found at the City of Hamilton Web site: [www.hamilton.ca](http://www.hamilton.ca)

