

Stormwater and Your Home

If you are a landowner, it is your responsibility to manage the stormwater on your property. As well as managing the problem of potential flooding, there is also the need to protect the environment from the impacts of stormwater run-off and the pollutants and sediment that the stormwater picks up as it flows over hard and soft surfaces. See the figure, as shown below:



Stormwater and your home (image courtesy of ECan web site).

Private drain

A private drain is any drainage systems constructed privately to service a single or small number of properties (combined private drainage).

The owner of the property or properties served by the private drain also own the private drain(s). If a public drain lies under private properties, then there should be an easement in place to allow ease of access for maintenance.

The maintenance of the private drain is the responsibility of the property owner(s). This would involve maintaining the drain be up to and including the connection to any public drainage system.

Stormwater discharge

With any new development, you should ensure that the stormwater discharge does not cause nuisance flooding to surrounding properties.

Any building activity, such as raising the ground level, increasing the impermeable area or blocking an overland flow path, could increase the amount of stormwater flowing onto a neighbour's site. You must obtain a building consent or resource consent from the Council for such an activity. An on-site stormwater management device may be required as part of the conditions of the consent. Refer to [On-site stormwater management devices](#) for more detail.

It is illegal to intentionally direct stormwater onto a neighbouring property. If this happens, the stormwater may cause damage to the neighbouring properties, which could lead to a dispute or, at worst, legal action and compensation.

Reduce flood risks

Here are a few tips to reduce flood risks to your property:

- When building new homes, garages or sheds, think about how the stormwater will flow over the surrounding ground. Remember that it will naturally and inevitably collect in dips and channels.
- Reduce the amount of ground covered with impermeable surfaces, such as concrete or asphalt. Permeable surfaces absorb the water, reducing the risk of flooding and discharge pollutants.
- Never obstruct an overland flow path – this will cause inevitable flooding.
- Ensure that habitable floors (those areas of the house such as kitchens, bedrooms and living areas) are always the correct height above the surrounding ground level. This is to ensure that stormwater is not able to invade the living areas on your property.

Protect the environment

Everyone has a moral and ethical responsibility to keep the stormwater drains free of pollutants and contaminants. Washing your car in the driveway or rinsing paint brushes into stormwater drains can affect the quality of the natural water and harm plants and animals that live downstream (knock-on effects).

Property owners can help protect the environment by using features such as rain gardens, permeable paving, or by planting selective native bushes around the streams.