



# DOWNSPOUT DISCONNECT



## Downspout Disconnection Defined

A downspout is a pipe that carries rainwater off of rooftops. Some downspouts drain into yards or other vegetated surface, while others drain directly into the sewer. Even during very short rains, downspouts that are connected to the sewer contribute to sewer overflows. When the sewer system fills up with rainwater, sewage overflows into the Rock Creek, Potomac, and Anacostia Rivers.

Disconnecting downspouts and diverting rain water onto your lawn or garden is an easy way to keep water out of the sewer system, keeping local rivers cleaner and our environment healthier.

## Stormwater Runoff and the District of Columbia

Stormwater runoff is rainwater that flows off impervious surfaces such as rooftops, driveways, roads, sidewalks and sometimes even lawns. Stormwater runoff travels from these surfaces to our streams, picking up pollutants such as oil and grease from our roadways and driveways as it goes. Nutrients from lawn fertilizers and bacteria from pet waste may also be picked up by stormwater and carried to our streams.

## RiverSmart Homes

*clean water starts here*



The District Department of the Environment (DDOE) RiverSmart Homes District-wide program offers incentives to homeowners interested in reducing stormwater pollution from their properties.

Find more information visit:  
[ddoe.dc.gov/riversmarthomes](http://ddoe.dc.gov/riversmarthomes) or  
call 202-535-2240





# How to Disconnect Downspouts

## Step 1: Observe your Site

Observe your site to ensure that water infiltrates into the ground in such a way that will not damage your foundation.

- Make sure water flows away from the house or other structures.
- Discharge water 5' feet from the house.
- Do not disconnect downspouts on slopes over 10%, into areas too small for good drainage, or where water will flow to a neighboring property
- Do not discharge water within 10 feet of a retaining wall.
- The end of the downspout extension should be 5 feet from your house, neighboring properties, and the sidewalk.

## Step 2: Design and Disconnect

- Secure downspout to the exterior of the building.
- **Measure** the downspout. Mark the downspout at 4' and 14' from the ground (or sewer pipe).
- **Cut** the downspout at the markings and remove the cut piece.
- **Cap** the sewer pipe and secure pipe with a hose clamp.
- Place an elbow extension over the edge of the downspout and secure with sheet metal screws or pop rivets.
- **Attach** the downspout extension and elbow to the cut downspout. **Screw** to secure
- Cut the downspout extension to the desired length. (Note: Some corrugated pipes can be breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Be sure to use a pipe that will not hold water.)
- **Place** a splash block and river rock at the end of the extension to prevent erosion.

*\* Necessary tools and materials (listed below) can be found at your local hardware store.*

## Step 3: Maintain

- Clean gutters at least twice per year.
- Reinforce low spots along gutter with new hangers.
- Check that all elbows and extensions are securely fastened.
- Check and clear elbows in downspouts.
- Do not drain water onto impervious surfaces.
- Make sure water flows away from the house.

## Tools and Materials:



- Hacksaw
- Gloves
- Drill
- Tape measure
- Screwdriver
- Pipe cap and clamp
- Downspout extension and elbow (aluminum, steel, copper, or vinyl)
- Sheet metal screws or pop rivets
- Aluminum shears (optional)

Measure



Cut



Cap



Attach



Screw



Place

