



## Why Is Storm Drain Cleaning Necessary?

by Douglas Lovins

**S**torm drains... we all see them; we all avoid parking near them in a rainstorm; we all wonder where they might lead. However, have you really ever thought about their purpose, or what might happen if they are not properly maintained? Probably not, but these drains are not simply holes in the parking lot, covered by a steel grid, leading to a bottomless pit. Storm drains are designed and engineered to meet the demands of rain water, as well as runoff from roofs, landscaping, and paved parking areas. Any water that is used (and not absorbed by the ground) for pressure cleaning, car washing, or simply watering your garden will eventually find its way to a storm drain. Without proper care and maintenance,



clogged storm drains can lead to disastrous results, both for your property, and for your sales revenue.

In South Florida, where the rainy season starts in May and continues through November, it is absolutely essential to have a drainage system that can quickly and efficiently remove all standing water. All commercial parking lots must be equipped with storm drains. As many of us have seen, some businesses are better than others at maintaining such a system. How many times have you passed up a restaurant you wanted to dine in or a shop you wished to shop in because of a flooded parking lot? This is a far too common scenario in much of South Florida; however, this should never happen if the drains have been properly cared for throughout the year.

When storm drains are functioning properly, it is amazing how well they are

able to receive huge volumes of water and dissipate it underground almost immediately. So if these storm drains are so effective, and distribute excessive water so efficiently, why is it necessary for them to be cleaned every six months? It is simple. Storm drains don't only collect excess water; they become a haven for anything that can fit through a steel grid that covers the drain. As the catch basin in the drain begins to fill with dirt, leaves, and debris, the drain lines begin to clog. The clogged lines stop the water from flowing properly, and as a result parking lots begin to flood.

So how can flooding be prevented? It is really very simple. In order to keep the lines from clogging, the catch basins must be cleaned, and the drain field lines are opened with a probe and blasted with high pressure. This should occur every six months to keep drain lines free of clogging debris and parking lots free from annoying flooding. In addition to keeping parking lots from flooding, a well-maintained storm drain is also essential for keeping bacteria levels low and promoting a safer, cleaner environment. Standing water can lead to many waterborne pathogens, including, but not limited to, dysentery, typhoid fever, and hepatitis A. All the more reason to keep your storm drains free and clear of debris so water can drain properly.

One final, but perhaps most compelling reason for properly maintained storm drains, would be the legal issues that can potentially arise from slip and fall accidents. Some cities in South Florida have even passed ordinances that require all condominium associations to have their storm drains cleaned and serviced a minimum of once a year. Smart business owners also know that it is much easier to avoid possible injuries and potential lawsuits before accidents happen. Proper storm drain maintenance is one easy way to accomplish this.

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