

# Cleaning Your Carpets Fact Sheet



## **Water Pollution**

Sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced in recent years. Now, more than 60% of water pollution comes from things like runoff from homes, excess fertilizer and pet waste. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. So believe it or not, the biggest source of water pollution today is not industry— it is actually households like yours. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water. And it starts with realizing that our sewers and storm systems are separate—what goes into storm drains flows directly into the environment, untreated.

## **Using Professional Carpet Cleaners**

- Make certain your carpet cleaner knows and follows the appropriate practices.
- Ask the cleaner where they intend to dispose of **your** wastewater.
- Insist that the wastewater is discharged to your sanitary sewer through your sink or toilet.
- In non-sewered areas, insist wastewater and residues should be retained in collection tanks, and transported to an appropriate sanitary sewer discharge point.
- If a pervious area is to be used, verify that it does not directly flow into the street, gutter or directly to the storm drain inlet.



***Know where it flows!***

## **What You Can Do**

- If you clean your own carpets, rugs or upholstery, dispose of your waste down a sink or toilet. Even if a cleaning product is labeled “non-toxic” or “biodegradable”.
- Carpet cleaning wastewater should be filtered before discharging it to the sanitary sewer to prevent carpet fibers from clogging pipes. The filtered material can be disposed of in the garbage, provided that the waste is not contaminated with hazardous pollutants.
- Wastewater may be discharged to a pervious area, such as a lawn, as long as it does not overflow into the street, gutter, parking lot or storm drain.
- Wastewater must **never** be discharged into the street, gutter, or parking lot that empties directly into the storm sewer system.

## **Pollution Prevention at Home**

Waste water from carpet cleaning may contain detergents, potentially hazardous chemicals and suspended carpet fibers. Detergents may even contain phosphorus. Phosphorus is a nutrient that can promote excessive algae growth in our water bodies that will degrade water quality. Some carpet cleaning agents are directly toxic to aquatic life.

Suspended carpet fibers can clog fish gills, reduce growth rates, decrease resistance to disease and impair reproduction. The deposition of these solids can also damage habitat filling spaces between rocks that provide shelter to aquatic organisms, as well as covering and smothering the eggs of fish and aquatic insects.'

