

Storm Sewer Stenciling Instructions

Undertaking a Storm Sewer Stenciling Project

The following are basic guidelines to keep in mind before, during and after conducting a storm sewer stenciling project.

1. Gather background information by reviewing the storm stenciling websites provided below and through your own internet search.
2. Pick a day to conduct the stenciling activity. Select a “rain date” in the event of inclement weather. Never stencil immediately before expected rain or immediately after. Also choose a calm day. Excessive wind can blow paint on to nearby cars and make the stencil look messy.
3. Contact your Public Works Department to:
 - thoroughly discuss the project and **obtain written permission**;
 - provide an example of the graphic to be stenciled;
 - determine which storm sewers discharge directly to community surface waters; and
 - obtain a map of storm sewer intakes
4. Once permission is received, obtain materials to conduct the storm sewer stenciling activity. Many of the necessary materials must be purchased but some can be made. Making your own stencils is discussed later.
5. Contact the local media about your event. Be prepared with basic information about the project (who, what, when, where, and why).
6. Be sure to wear old clothes and shoes.
7. If the storm sewer stenciling project is a youth activity, be sure to have adults present to supervise the stenciling and to watch for traffic.

WHAT items are needed for Storm Drain Stenciling?

- A map of storm sewer intakes
- Stencils
- Paint (a standard-sized can CFC-free aerosol paint will cover about 20 stencils)
- Wire brush
- Broom or whisk broom
- Cardboard box (for overspray shield)
- Cleanup rags and trash bags
- Mylar purchased from a local art or craft store
- Letter stencils
- Fish or other graphic stencil, if desired
- Exacto knife or similar sharp small blade
- Narrow lined felt tipped marker

TIPS for applying Stencils:

- Remind participants to wear old clothes and shoes. They might also consider rubber gloves and protective eyewear.
- Scrub the area briskly with a wire brush and remove loose dirt with a broom or whisk broom. Be sure to sweep debris away from the storm drain and collect in a trash bag.
- Place the stencil as close to the storm sewer intake as possible.



Depending on the situation this could be the sidewalk, street or gutter cover.

- Apply two thin coats of spray paint rather than one thick coat.
- Apply spray paint in a sweeping motion.
- A carefully applied, clean stencil is desired. A neat public awareness message will be better received than a messy one.
- When the paint application is finished, carefully lift the stencil up off the surface. Your purpose is to provide a public awareness message not to create a work of art.
- After all stenciling is finished, lay stencils out flat to dry for a day or so. When the paint is completely dry, Mylar stencils can be gently rolled to chip off excess paint. This works best if the paint does not build up too thick between cleanings.

Trace the text and graphic stencil patterns on to the Mylar. Carefully cut out the pattern to create your storm sewer stencil. A link to example templates is included. **Please Note:** The example stencils are on legal sized paper. Enlarge / reduce to meet your needs.

There are several commercial sources of storm sewer stencils each with a variety of shapes, sizes, messages and costs, or call around in your own community to see if stencils can be professionally made locally. The Art Department at a local school, college or graphic design company may make them as a donation to your project.

It is impossible for the Department to provide web addresses for all vendors of storm sewer stencils. The following web sites are provided simply to begin your search. The Department does not support one vendor over any other.