



Household Floor Drains

Do You Know Where Your Floor Drains Go?

Floor drains are collection points which remove wash water and other liquid wastes from a work area and carry them away through pipes. Where the pipes dump the liquid wastes is the big question.

Ideally, a floor drain should be hooked to a sanitary sewer for disposal by MSD. If the waste entering your floor drain is toxic or of large quantities, you should notify MSD to make sure they know what type of liquid wastes could enter their wastewater system. MSD may ask you to make an effort to prevent some types of pollution from entering the drains, possibly by developing a home spill prevention and containment plan, or installing an oil/water separator.

If you aren't sure where your floor drain goes, you may contact the original builder of the house and inquire. If you use a septic system for disposal of home wastes, your floor drain may be hooked into the septic system. Otherwise, the floor drain likely leads to a sump area that drains directly into the ground beneath your home, or just drains directly into the ground.



A plumber's views of a floor drain to be installed in a typical garage.

Know What Goes Down Your Floor Drains

Thinking about what goes down your floor drains may give you a little headache now, but it's a lot better than the BIG financial headache that could await you if liquid wastes from your floor drains pollute drinking water or the soil around your building. Consider not only what you KNOW goes down the drain, but also what might leak, spill, drip, or wash into them. Generally, liquid wastes can be divided into two broad categories, based on its potential risk to contaminate groundwater.

- ◆ **Low Risk** - This is waste water that a normal household would produce, including animal and vegetable matter, soap and diluted domestic-use cleaning solutions.
- ◆ **High Risk** - This waste water has ingredients in types or concentrations, which you may find in household waste water, but includes many pollutants. Be careful with:

Engine & Equipment Repair	Fuels, oils, degreasers, hydraulic fluids, cleaning solvents, antifreeze, metal waste
Car and Truck Washing	Oil and grease contaminated wash water
Painting and wallpapering	Paints, dyes, thinners, cleaning solutions, glues, and strippers
Pest Control and Lawn Care	Pesticides, fertilizers, and pesticide-contaminated waste water.

Even if the liquid wastes entering your floor drains is low risk, but liquids that may spill, leak, drip, or wash into the drain are of high risk, you must consider the waste stream as a high risk.

Make the Right Floor Connection

Ideally, your floor drains are connected to MSD. However, if they are not, you can take the following steps to reduce the potential for pollution.

Low Risk Waters - Connect your floor drains to an approved septic system. Floor drains may be connected to a septic system if:

- ◆ The disposal area is properly sized to handle the potential flow from the drains;
- ◆ There is no significant potential for pollutants to drip, spill, leak, or wash into the floor drains;
- ◆ The floor drain is necessary for the disposal of wash water or other liquid waste similar to household waste water.

High Risk Waters - Connect to a municipal sewer system, OR

- ◆ Seal the floor drains. Are the floor drains really needed? Floor drains should be eliminated where possible.
- ◆ Connect the drain to a holding tank. An above ground tank with both a sound and a visual alarm for full tank can be used. Holding tank waste must be analyzed prior to disposal and the contents disposed of as determined by laboratory analysis.
- ◆ Separate high risk waters from low risk waters by building a berm in the storage area. Activities pertaining to high risk waste would be performed in an area where the floor drains are sealed or connected to a holding tank. You can use a child's plastic swimming pool, bricks and heavy plastic, or a number of other items to construct the berm.
- ◆ Keep hazardous materials stored in sealed plastic bags and in plastic bins or containers that are clearly labeled.

Many household hazardous materials may be found in the garage, where a floor drain is often installed. Store these items away from children and pets, in plastic containers, if possible, and away from the floor drain. You can cover your drain with a plastic seal available at most hardware stores to prevent pollutants from entering the ground or your septic system.

If you're not sure where the drain goes, play it safe-treat the materials as if they were hazardous and prevent them from entering the drain system.

Before you mix, pour, use, or disturb a potentially hazardous liquid, cover the floor drain to prevent potential contaminants from entering the drain should an accident occur. Don't take a chance that your floor drain empties into the soil, instead of a sewer or your septic tank!

