Mandatory Downspout Disconnection

What is a downspout?
A downspout is a pipe that carries rainwater/snowmelt from the roof of your home or eavestrough and discharges either onto your property or into the sewer system via a drain pipe connection.

What is a drain pipe connection?
The drain pipe connection is the point where a downspout enters the ground. This typically indicates that the downspout is connected to a pipe that goes to the sewer system that runs under or next to your home and eventually to the main sewer under the street.

What is downspout disconnection?
Downspout disconnection is the process by which your existing downspout is cut (approx. 9 to 12 inches or 23 cm to 31 cm) above ground level. An elbow and an extension are then added to the downspout in order to divert rainwater and snowmelt onto the ground. The abandoned drain pipe is then capped. A splash pad may also be placed at the end of the downspout extension to prevent erosion and help direct the flow of water.

Do all downspouts on my property need to be disconnected?
Yes, all downspouts must be disconnected, where feasible.

How does disconnecting my downspout help prevent basement flooding?
Disconnecting your downspout from the sewer system helps to reduce the amount of stormwater that is sent through the sewers. Less stormwater in the system will help prevent wastewater from backing up through sewer pipes where it can escape through floor drains or any other low-lying plumbing fixtures in your basement.

How will the bylaw be enforced?
The City is asking all property owners to make every effort to disconnect as many downspouts as is feasible. Enforcement will only occur after November 20, 2011 in the Phase 1 area (please see map on the reverse side).

What if I choose not to disconnect?
If a homeowner does not comply with the requirements of the bylaw, the City may use its authority under the Municipal Code to enforce compliance. The City will not pursue penalties against any homeowner who makes a good faith effort to disconnect.

Do I need a city permit to disconnect my downspouts?
No, a permit is not required to have your downspouts disconnected.

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What if it is not technically feasible to disconnect or disconnection would create a hazardous condition?

Downspouts may be eligible for an exemption where City staff determine a disconnection is not feasible or creates a hazard. For example, the downspout is located near areas of property where it could be unsafe to drain, there is not ground area for drainage, or if downspouts are inside the wall of the building. The exemption application is available at toronto.ca/water or call 311 for more information.

Is there financial assistance available?

The City may provide financial assistance to low income property owners. For more information go to toronto.ca/water or call 311.

Where should I direct the water flow?

The water from a downspout should flow onto your property where it can soak into the ground. Never direct the water onto a neighbour's property or a sidewalk.

Can I disconnect my downspout to a rain barrel?

Your downspout can be directed into a rain barrel during the spring, summer and fall. Overflow from your rain barrel will need to be directed to a safe discharge area. During winter months, your rain barrel should be removed and stored to avoid freezing and breaking. If you do this, then an extension should be added to your downspout to ensure proper drainage of water away from your home when your rain barrel is removed.

Will I need to relocate my downspouts?

Homeowners may need to consider relocating their downspouts to the front or back of their property to ensure that water can properly drain. It's best to survey your property to ensure you have enough area for the water to soak safely into the ground.

For more information on the Mandatory Downspout Disconnection Program go to **toronto.ca/water** or call **311**.