

# What are Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)?

Combined sewer systems are sewers that are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. Most of the time, combined sewer systems transport all of their wastewater to a sewage treatment plant, where it is treated and then discharged to a water body. During periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt, however, the wastewater volume in a combined sewer system can exceed the capacity of the sewer system or treatment plant. For this reason, combined sewer systems are designed to overflow occasionally and discharge excess wastewater directly to nearby streams, rivers, or other water bodies. These overflows, called combined sewer overflows (CSOs), contain not only storm water but also untreated human and industrial waste, toxic materials, and debris. They are a major water pollution concern for the approximately 772 cities in the U.S. that have combined sewer systems. CSOs may be thought of as a type of "urban wet weather" discharge. This means that, like sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) and storm water discharges, they are discharges from a municipality's wastewater conveyance infrastructure that are caused by precipitation events such as rainfall or heavy snowmelt.

It is important to note that the City of Norwalk is working diligently to control these overflows, as evidenced most recently with the construction of the \$6M Pleasant Street Lift Station. Many other combined sewer projects have already been completed and there are 2 more to come. In the interest of protecting public health, the City has developed a Combined Sewer Overflow Public Notification Plan to make interested parties (residents, City officials, Parks personnel, and other potentially affected entities) aware whenever any of the combined sewer overflows are active during wet weather events. This notification will be sent out via an email list serve within four hours of the City becoming aware of active combined sewer overflows. Any interested party who wants to be included on these emails can sign up by contacting the Superintendent of the Norwalk Wastewater Pollution Control Plant. [Click Here to Sign up](#). For additional information, please call the Superintendent of the City of Norwalk Wastewater Treatment plant at (419) 663-6725.

