

# Understand Your Stormwater Drainage System



Photos courtesy of MEMA.

Generally, most rainwater is quickly absorbed into the ground or runs into estuaries or ponds and generally poses no flooding concern. If, however, recent rains have kept water levels high, if the ground is frozen, or in extreme droughts when the ground has hardened and is no longer as permeable, there is a greater likelihood of sheet flow, causing surface water “ponding” or standing water in streets and yards. Roadway and parking lot drainage systems are typically designed to handle 25 year storms (a storm that has a 4% (1/25) chance of occurring in any given year).

Even the best maintained drainage systems cannot totally prevent flooding. During and after extremely heavy rain or rapid snow melt, standing water in streets, yards, and low-lying areas for extended periods of time is expected and normal.

## How Can You Help?

- ❑ **Learn** about the drainage system supporting your development or individual home and how it is tied into the area system. Your town engineer can provide this information.

- ❑ **Report** the location and condition of clogged, damaged, or malfunctioning facilities to town Departments of Public Works or Engineering, or to Homeowners Associations if you live on private streets. They may then have the opportunity to make the necessary repairs and ensure that the drainage systems are functioning properly in advance of a serious storm or rain/melt event.
- ❑ **Clear debris** from drains or catch basin grates that are near your home or business. During a major weather event while town staff is stressed and likely to be dealing with emergencies, it is not realistic to expect that they will be available to ensure that all drains are clear of leaves, trash, and other debris. Please help enable your community's drainage system to function by ensuring that the drains in front of your home or business are clear of debris. This simple “good neighbor” measure can go along way to

preventing street and yard flooding and its related property damage.

- ❑ **Do not treat your drainage system like a garbage disposal.** Keep catch basins, ditches, swales, drainage grates and retention ponds clear of debris, trash and other discarded material, and contaminants.
- ❑ **Do not pump** flooded basements or empty swimming pools into streets or catch basins as this could clog drainage facilities and pollute nearby water bodies.