

Dewatering Underground Vaults and Manholes

Guideline

Issue Date: 02/22/2021

Applies to: University of Michigan employees and contractors

Maintenance work often needs to occur inside of underground utility vaults or manholes. Occasionally, rainwater or groundwater infiltrates these areas and must be removed in order to perform work. This removal process can cause negative environmental impacts to surface waters if the water is contaminated or collects sediment before entering the storm water system. Note: This guideline does not give permission to enter confined spaces. That is covered by other guidance and regulation. Please contact EHS for additional information related to working within a confined space

- Before dewatering, use sight and smell to identify any potential contamination concerns. If the water has a sheen, odor, color, or other visual or olfactory characteristics, or if the property is a known site of contamination, do not discharge to a storm drain. Contact EHS-EPPP at 734-647-1143 for evaluation.
- When dewatering, divert water to a stabilized, vegetated area that allows for infiltration. Note: This option should only be considered if the ground is not saturated or frozen.
- If discharge to a vegetated area is not possible, assess the drainage path from the vault to the nearest storm drain. When possible, discharge the water directly into the storm drain, avoiding overland flow. Otherwise, ensure that water will not flow through bare soil, trash/debris, or mulched areas. If water contains sediment or is turbid, it must be filtered prior to discharge to a storm drain. Only clear water, free of chemicals, can be discharged to the storm water drainage system.
- On construction sites, coordinate with the contractor for the removal of any inlet filter bags as needed prior to discharging to a storm drain.

For more information, contact EHS - EPPP at 734-647-1143 or visit our [EHS Storm Water website](#).