

Correctly connected, rivers protected

When we think about river pollution, we might assume it comes from places like factories, farms and industry. Yet in many cases the pollution in our rivers comes from a much less obvious source - our homes. Incorrect plumbing could mean that waste water from dishwashers, washing machines, sinks and even toilets is flushed directly into a local river. These 'misconnected' pipes are a common cause of pollution to rivers and streams. The Environment Agency have a duty to investigate such incidents, and are encouraging you to check your drains.

How does it work?

There are normally two forms of drainage in most houses connected to mains sewers - surface water and foul water.

- **Surface water drains** carry rainwater from road surfaces and rooftops into local rivers and streams which flows into the river untreated.
- **Foul water drains** carry waste water from toilets, sinks, baths and household appliances to the sewage treatment works. This water is treated before it can safely flow back into river and streams.

Some older houses may have a combined drainage system which takes both surface and waste water. In this case all the water goes into the foul sewer for treatment.

How can you check for misconnected pipes?

Check the outside of your property:

- **A roof rain pipe** is connected to the roof gutter and carries rainwater to the surface drain.
- **A toilet pipe** is usually larger in diameter than a roof drainpipe and may have a vent at the top. This should have all your waste water from dishwashers, toilets etc connecting to it.

The property owner must fix any misconnected pipes. It is often simple and cheap to sort out the problem.

If you do not fix a wrongly connected pipe, you could face a fine of up to £20,000. For more information on misconnected pipes and how you can check your home, visit www.connectright.org.uk or telephone the Environment Agency on 0845 603 3113.

