

As mowing season is again in full swing, it is a little known fact that if you mow your lawn so that the clippings deposit onto any street, sidewalk, parking lot, ditch or watercourse, then you are breaking the City of Sapulpa Code of Ordinances. The Sapulpa City Code, Part 14, Streets and Public Works, Chapter 4, Stormwater Management Program, Section 14-408 states that "No person shall discharge or cause to be discharged into the municipal storm water drainage system or watercourses any materials, including but not limited to pollutants or waters containing any pollutants that cause or contribute to a violation of applicable water quality standards, other than stormwater." The term "pollutant" is defined as: "Anything which causes or contributes to pollution. Pollutants may include, but are not limited to: paints, varnishes, and solvents; oil and other automotive fluids; non-hazardous liquid and solid wastes and **yard wastes**; refuse, rubbish, garbage, litter, or other discarded or abandoned objects; floatables; **pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and fertilizers**; hazardous substances and wastes; sewage; fecal coliform; pathogens; dissolved and particulate metals; **animal wastes**; sediment, wastes and residues that result from constructing a building or structure and/or altering premises; and noxious or offensive matter of any kind."

The City of Sapulpa has been issued an OKR04 Phase II General Permit for Stormwater Discharges to Sapulpa's creeks, lakes and rivers. This permit requires the City of Sapulpa to minimize and/or eliminate the amount of pollutants discharged to Sapulpa's creeks, lakes and rivers. Efforts to control grass clippings from being deposited into the street or watercourse is an important element toward this goal. Besides being unsightly, leaving grass clippings in the street clogs storm sewer catch basins and contributes to flooding

and potential property damage when heavy rains occur.

Grass clippings contain about 4% nitrogen, 2% potassium and 1% phosphorus. These excess nutrients can cause algae blooms in Sapulpa's waterbodies. When algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.

Grass clippings returned to the lawn provides up to 25% of your lawn's total fertilizer needs. If left on your lawn in moderation, grass clippings reduce the lawn's water loss and its need for fertilizer.

In addition to grass and leaves, pesticides, fertilizers, and pet waste are prohibited discharges into stormwater drains. Pet waste carries bacteria, viruses and parasites that can threaten the health of humans (especially children) and wildlife. Decaying pet waste consumes oxygen and can release ammonia, which can lead to fish kills. Pesticides and fertilizers are high in nutrients that, when broken down, can cause algae blooms in waterbodies and lead to low dissolved oxygen.

It may not seem like a big issue, but anything that can potentially threaten our environment is something to be taken very seriously. What will happen if you are caught putting grass clippings, leaves, oil or even pet waste in Sapulpa streets or stormwater drains? You could be assessed a minimum fine of \$200.00 with a maximum fine of \$1,000 per day.

Any chemical or contaminant that is on the grass or leaves can be carried by the stormwater and eventually to creeks or lakes, where we get our drinking water. With cooperation by everyone, we can keep our natural waters clean.