



# Drain Care Guide

**CITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

**THE** CAMBRIDGE  
DEPARTMENT  
OF PUBLIC  
**WORKS**

# What is Cambridge's Storm Stewards Program?

Storm Stewards is a way for Cambridge residents to help protect the health of our local rivers and reduce street flooding. Residents and business owners are encouraged to participate by claiming (and naming!) a storm drain in their neighborhood and keeping the drain clear of debris, particularly ahead of rain events.



**Storm drains are the grates you see on streets, typically square-shaped along the curb.** Since pavement cannot absorb water, rain and melting snow travel flow along the street and into these drains. As stormwater flows, it picks up pollutants left on driveways, sidewalks and streets. In Cambridge, stormwater flows to the Charles River or Alewife Brook.

With 5,800 City owned storm drains in Cambridge, the task of maintaining them is substantial. City crews work diligently to clear storm drains before and after storms, but this task can be completed more quickly with community assistance. Volunteers can significantly expedite the process, aiding in both pre- and post-storm checks to keep drains functioning optimally.



# What Does it Mean to Claim a Drain?

## Sign up to Monitor a Specific Drain (or drains!)

By claiming a drain, volunteers commit to checking on a drain each month and keeping it clear of debris, like trash and leaves. Participants sign up to monitor a specific drain (or drains!). They check on their drain before and after heavy rain, wind, or snow, and provide any necessary care. This ensures stormwater can flow into the drain and helps keep these materials out of our waterways. By keeping the drains clear, we can also prevent street flooding and ensure unimpeded water flow.



## Become a Storm Steward

Any Cambridge resident willing to monitor a storm drain is welcome to become a Storm Steward. Residents can claim as many drains as they would like to care for.

For questions about Storm Stewards or stormwater in general, please contact:

[stormwater@cambridgema.gov](mailto:stormwater@cambridgema.gov).

# Instructions for Cleaning your Drain:

1

Check your drain before and after significant weather events, such as rainfall or snowstorms. Remove any debris that directly blocks your storm drain and clear an area a few feet around the drain to prevent potential blockages. This may include leaves, sticks, snow, or trash.

2

When clearing a drain, wear gloves or use a rake or broom to clear the drain, being cautious when handling debris. Never try to remove the grate or reach inside the storm drain.

3

Dispose of trash or recyclables appropriately in their respective bins for curbside collection. Organic materials like leaves and sticks can be disposed of with your yard waste. If you have any questions regarding proper disposal, refer to City of Cambridge curbside collection page.

4

If you notice any damage or have concerns about your drain, please report non-emergency issues through [Commonwealth Connect](#).

## General Volunteer Guidelines

As a Storm Stewards volunteer, please follow these guidelines for your safety:

### General Safety

- Wear appropriate footwear, clothing, sunscreen, and, if necessary, eye protection.
- Exercise extra caution in wet or slippery conditions.

### Traffic Safety

- Exercise caution and be mindful of road traffic, watching out for cars, trucks, and bicycles.
- Work from the sidewalk as much as possible.
- Wear a bright reflective work vest or bright-colored clothing.
- Cross streets at signals or designated crosswalks, avoiding mid-block crossings.

### Debris Removal

- Wear gloves or use a rake or broom when clearing the drain, exercising caution when handling debris.
- Always sweep, rake, or shovel glass and avoid picking up sharp objects by hand.
- Never touch hazardous or medical waste (including automotive fluids and hypodermic needles). Report such items through [Commonwealth Connect](#).

## **Storm Stewards Volunteer Terms of Service**

I am voluntarily participating in the City of Cambridge's Storm Stewards program. I have read and agree to follow the Volunteer Guidelines. I acknowledge that participating in these events involves inherent risks, and I accept full responsibility for any associated liability and risk. By signing up, I confirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

By signing up, I agree to allow the City of Cambridge to send me emails related to my chosen drains.

I understand that as a volunteer, I have control over the dates and times of my work. The City of Cambridge is not responsible for scheduling my volunteer activities or monitoring my compliance with the guidelines. I affirm that I am not receiving any compensation or consideration for my participation, and I have read, understood, and freely and willingly agreed to the release and hold harmless provisions stated below.

When adopting a storm drain, residents are encouraged to get creative with the names they choose. However, please note that the City reserves the right to review and approve all storm drain names to ensure they are appropriate for public display. Names that are deemed offensive, inappropriate, or do not align with the City's values or Storm Stewards program goals may be subject to change. The City will reach out to residents for an alternative name if needed.

I agree to release, waive, and forever discharge the City of Cambridge ("the City") and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ("the Commonwealth"), as well as their respective employees, departments, officers, and agents, from any and all actions, causes of action, claims, demands, damages, costs, loss of services, expenses and compensation claims or demands arising from accidents, illnesses, injuries, losses, destruction, or property damage directly or indirectly resulting from my participation in this activity.

I further agree not to, whether by myself or in concert with others, pursue any judicial proceeding of any kind whatsoever against the City of Cambridge or the Commonwealth or their respective employees, departments, officers, and agents, for any injury, loss, or damage arising from or related to my participation in this activity, regardless of whether it is caused by negligence or otherwise.

This Waiver and Release is binding on my spouse, heirs, executors, administrators, assigns, employees, insurers, subrogees and all of my family members. It applies to all losses, known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected, related to my participation in this activity.

This Waiver and Release contains the entire agreement between the parties hereto, and the terms of this release are contractual, not a mere recital.

Last updated March 18, 2024.