

Planning some plumbing or drainage work at home?

Avoid cross-connections!

A common mistake home-owners and handy-people make with plumbing and drainage is connecting wastewater pipes to stormwater pipes or vice-versa (known as cross-connections).

The two networks are separate, and it is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure they stay that way.

Misconnecting wastewater (which includes sewage from toilets) to stormwater drains, or connecting rainwater pipes to wastewater drains (such as via gully traps), results in pollution entering our environment. The "no swimming" signs on Wellington's waterfront are largely a result of cross-connections.

Some facts you need to know:

Certain plumbing and drainage work requires you to have:

- a building consent before you start work
- one or more building inspections while work is under way
- a final inspection when work is completed
- a formal code compliance certificate, issued once council inspectors are satisfied that the work complies with the building code and your building consent

Keep it "legit" – keep it safe – for you and for the environment

If you don't gain a code compliance certificate for plumbing or drainage work that requires a consent, or if you fail to ensure other work is done to the appropriate standard by accredited tradespeople, you could be liable for a fine and the cost of re-doing the entire job. It is safest to check with your council what work you need a building consent for.

Insurance implications

Cross-connections and other un-consented work could affect your insurance cover for damage that could be linked to that work. Unless you really do know what you are doing, and you are sure that you are covered legally, always use an appropriately accredited tradesperson.

You can find accredited tradespeople at: www.pgdb.co.nz/consumer/hiring-a-tradesperson or masterplumbers.org.nz.

Help keep your environment, your home and your family healthy and protected. Make sure you and your tradesperson are connecting the right pipes to the right network.

The difference between the ‘three waters’

	Drinking Water	Stormwater	Wastewater
What's in it?	Potable water	Rainwater and runoff – from roofs, road, cars etc	Water that’s been used for domestic or commercial purposes
Where does it come from?	Rivers and aquifers in wider Wellington region	Rain	Your toilets, shower, sinks, dishwasher, washing machines
Is it treated?	Yes Purified at bulk water treatment plants, and chlorinated to keep it safe from contamination	No Stormwater drains to streams and the sea <i>untreated</i>	Yes Wastewater treatment plants treat all wastewater and discharge treated water to the ocean
So what's the problem?	Waste Fresh water is a precious resource that costs money to catch, treat and deliver. We also have only limited storage, so have to be careful during dry spells	Contamination Cross-connecting wastewater pipes to stormwater pipes. Putting <i>anything</i> but pure rainwater into stormwater pipes affects our environment	Overflows Cross-connecting stormwater pipes into wastewater pipes overloads them during heavy rain. The result can be faecal contamination of the environment
What can I do to help solve the problem?	Use less water – Shower shorter, fix leaks, choose water efficient appliances, wash full loads, follow watering restrictions	Make sure only rainwater sources are connected to your stormwater pipes. Keep your stormwater drains clear. Keep wastewater out!	Keep drains in good repair and clear of tree roots. Don't allow rainwater downpipes to flow into your wastewater “gully trap” Keep stormwater out!
Is this my responsibility?	We all need water. We pay for water via our rates. If we use less, we keep treatment and storage costs down, and make sure we all have water when we need it.	You must ensure that drains remain clear and only uncontaminated rainwater enters the stormwater network. Any contamination goes directly into the waterways and the coastal environment	Maintenance and correct configuration of your wastewater plumbing and drains (up to where they connect to the council sewer main) is your responsibility. You must also keep your drains clear
Where does my responsibility for maintenance of this service begin?	At the “Toby”, the tap controlling water supply from the council water main to your house	At the point where your drain joins the council stormwater main, or the outside kerb if it drains to the kerb channel	At the point where your drain joins the council sewer main (this point may be beyond your property boundary)
Who is qualified for this service?	A plumber who holds a current licence authorised by the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board	A drainlayer who holds a current licence authorised by the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board	A drainlayer who holds a current licence authorised by the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board
What about my insurance cover?	Some insurance policies do not cover claims for water or other damage from appliance installations, or plumbing & drainage work not completed by an appropriately authorised person. Check your policy, and/or council requirements to ensure your plumbing and drainage work is carried out by only “authorised” tradespeople for the job (such as a plumber or drainlayer holding the appropriate licence).		