

City of Yakima

Issues Brief

◆ Curb Markers Reinforce “Only Rain Down The Storm Drain” Message

For a long time, a lot of things that never should have ended up in the City of Yakima’s stormwater drainage system did. Litter, grease, oil, grass clippings, soap used to wash cars in driveways. With little or no thought given to where those and other kinds of materials and liquids were headed, they were simply washed from streets, sidewalks, and gutters into the stormwater system.

“Whether done accidentally, intentionally, or unknowingly, putting those kinds of things into the stormwater system creates big problems,” said City of Yakima Utility Engineer Shelley Willson. “Now we know better. The only thing that should be going down stormwater drains is rain,” said Willson.

That’s because the runoff that the stormwater drainage system is designed to capture does not go through the City’s wastewater treatment plant. Instead, it is discharged untreated into streams and rivers or ultimately can end up in the groundwater system. If runoff consists primarily of natural precipitation, stormwater is relatively harmless. However, when it contains pollutants such as fertilizer, heavy metals, or cleaning chemicals, stormwater can be toxic to habitats that support fish and other aquatic life.

A key part of the City of Yakima’s stormwater management program is educating the community about what the stormwater system should be used for. The latest part of that effort included the installation of 500 markers (pictured at right) in the downtown core. The markers are placed directly adjacent to stormwater drains.



Curb markers serve as a reminder that only rain should go down storm drains.

“Yakima is one of many cities across the nation that are using the curb markers to help get the message out,” said Willson. “They are a very obvious visual reminder that only rain should go down storm drains. Hopefully, if someone thinks about dumping something inappropriate down the storm drain, they will see a curb marker and stop,” said Willson.

Later this year, the City will be installing another 1000 curb markers at various locations around town. The cost of the curb markers is being covered by a Washington State Department of Ecology grant.

More educational materials about stormwater systems can be found at the Regional Stormwater Management System website – www.yakima-stormwater.com – and on the City’s website – www.yakimawa.gov/services/stormwtr.

For more information about this article, contact Utility Engineer Shelley Willson by phone (576-6302) or by e-mail (swillson@ci.yakima.wa.us).

✦ Free Music Will Fill Parks This Summer

Music lovers have plenty of opportunity this summer to enjoy free entertainment at two Yakima parks.

The venerable Summer Sunset Concert Series will return for six dates at Franklin Park in July and August while the Yakima Valley Community Band will fill Randall Park with classic tunes for a half-dozen nights beginning on the 4th of July.

The Summer Sunset Concert Series at Franklin Park will kick off its season on July 12th and will continue every Thursday through August 16th. Performances run from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. This year's lineup Indie Folk group *Not Amy* (July 12th), Yakima favorite *Wayman Chapman* and his contemporary stylings (July 19th), the *Yogoman Burning Band* with its take on reggae and soul (July 26th), the classic rock and country sounds of the *Little Big Band* (August 2nd), blues group *Tuck Foster & The Mossrites* (August 9th), and folk blues legend *Alice Stuart & The Formerlys* (August 16th).

Although all of the performances are free to attend, concert goers are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items that will be donated to Northwest Harvest.

KXDD 104.1, BOB 105.7, Oldies 100.9, Yakima Folklife Association, Dan Craig Precision Optical, Allied Arts, Yakima Valley Museum, and Yakima Parks and Recreation also provided sponsorship and other support that made the concert series possible this year.

The Yakima Valley Community Band begins its 2012 run of six free Wednesday night performances at Randall Park on the 4th of July. The Community Band concerts start at 7:00 pm and usually last about an hour. The final Community Band performance of the year will be on August 8th.

For more information about this article, contact Community Relations Manager Randy Beehler by phone (901-1142) or by e-mail (rbeehler@ci.yakima.wa.us).

✦ City's Fire Hydrants To Get Annual Checkup

Fire hydrants stand silent guard in neighborhoods throughout Yakima. Few are ever called into action. But each has to be ready to respond at a moment's notice. Ensuring that the City's fire hydrants are in good working order ensures that lives can be saved.

That's why City Water/Irrigation crews spend time every summer testing a quarter of the more than 3,000 hydrants in the city.

"People tend to take fire hydrants for granted," said Dave Brown, the City's Water/Irrigation Manager. "But like anything else, hydrants need to receive regular maintenance so they are ready to go when they're needed. Making sure that all of the City's fire hydrants are working properly isn't exactly the most glamorous job, but it's right up there with the most important ones," said Brown.

Annual testing of hydrants is a requirement of the Fire Ratings Bureau and plays a role in how insurance rates are established for homes and businesses in the Yakima area.

In addition to testing to make sure that water will flow correctly if fire hoses are hooked to them, crews also check to see if hydrants need a new coat of paint.

"Typically we repaint at least 500 hydrants each year", Brown said. Some hydrants require touchups because they have been hit by graffiti while others have simply faded over time.

It typically takes about five employees roughly 30 days to complete the hydrant testing/painting program each year.

For more information about this article, contact Water/Irrigation Manager Dave Brown by phone (575-6154) or by e-mail (dbrown@ci.yakima.wa.us).