

Adopt a Drain SF

Help Us Keep San Francisco's 25,000 Storm Drains Clear



Launched in October 2016, the Adopt a Drain Program enables San Francisco residents to "adopt" one of the City's 25,000 storm drains, keeping it free of debris. While helping to reduce localized flooding, the program also fosters community engagement by encouraging San Franciscans to take an active role in improving their neighborhood. To sign up and adopt a drain, go to adoptadrain.sfwater.org!



[Check out photos from past events.](#)

How to Care for Your Adopted Drain

- If possible, clear the drain before it starts raining.

- Put leaves and other natural material in the green compost bin. Put trash in the black garbage bin.
- Clear about 10 feet on both sides of the drain.
- Medical waste or needles? Construction debris? Toxic materials? Report it to the City's Customer Service Center, SF311.org on the web (or dial 3-1-1).

Drain Clearing Safety Tips

- Never try to lift the drain grate.
- Clear from the sidewalk, not the street.
- Wear reflective clothing so vehicles can see you.
- Always wear gloves and be careful of sharp objects!
- Use a rake, broom, or shovel - not your hands.

Remember, the City and County of San Francisco won't be held responsible for anything that happens to you or others in service of maintaining your drain. Please be careful!

Free Tools and Training

Once you sign up, you'll receive periodic email notifications prior to large storms to clear your drain(s) before it rains. You'll also receive invites to VIP volunteer events during the rainy season where you can get safety gear and drain clearing supplies.

Why adopt a drain?

In San Francisco, we have a combined sewer system that collects stormwater and sewage in the same network of pipes. While the system is made to handle a significant amount of rainfall, in large rain storms when the system reaches capacity, some low-lying areas of the City, especially areas that used to be creeks or streams, can experience flooding and property damage. No sewer system, including ours, can be designed to manage all the stormwater in all storms.

Our preventative operations and maintenance program includes inspecting, cleaning, repairing, and replacing aging sewers. Our crews use specialized trucks and equipment to deep clean more than 5,000 of the City's 25,000+ catch basins each year, with a focus on low-lying areas of the city that are prone to flooding. We also monitor the weather forecasts carefully and when major storms are expected, we increase our staffing and deploy strike teams to monitor priority areas prone to flooding, even at night and on weekends.

Keeping storm drains and catch basins clear of leaves and debris helps avoid flooding and enables stormwater to drain properly. We appreciate our drain adopters to help us keep the drains clear of leaves and debris, protect the environment and help minimize risk of flooding. Find a drain and sign up at adoptadrain.sfwater.org.



[Read our Frequently Asked Questions.](#)

Program Background

Code for San Francisco, a non-profit volunteer group and local chapter of Code for America, used open data (drain locations) to develop the Adopt a Drain web application at no cost to the city. The program was inspired by Boston's Adopt a Hydrant Program. The popular program has garnered media attention and attracted interest from various city, state and national governments who are interested in replicating it in their community.

Spread the Word

Excited about the Adopt a Drain program? We encourage you to invite your coworkers, friends and neighbors to participate. Use social media to spread the word or [pass along this flyer](#).



Remember to tag us @SFWater and to use the following hashtags: #DrainHero, #AdoptADrain and #SFsewer.

Contact Us

Email questions and feedback to RainReadySF@sfgov.org. We'd love to hear from you.

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