

Little-known Responsibilities of D.C. Homeowners / Residents

This bulletin is intended to inform North Portal Estates homeowners of little-known, codified D.C. rules so that each of us can make informed and considerate decisions regarding these matters.

Did you know?

PRIVATE SWIMMING POOLS: Private swimming pools must be drained in accordance with D.C. Department of Energy & Environment guidelines. In fact, draining swimming pools onto City streets may be subject to heavy fines.

“District of Columbia law prohibits the discharge of swimming pool water into public space. Chlorinated swimming pool water may also not be discharged into the municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) or storm drain. The MS4 conveys water directly to rivers and streams, and chlorinated water can kill aquatic life. The penalty for a first offense is up to \$1,000, and doubles for each subsequent offense.”

Help: For more information or to report a possible illicit discharge, please call the District Department of the Environment’s Water Quality Division at (202) 535-2600.
<https://doee.dc.gov/service/how-drain-your-swimming-pool-properly>

FENCES: D.C. has specific guidelines pertaining to the construction and/or replacement of fences on one’s own private property or along property boundaries—to include the requirement to obtain a permit from D.C.’s Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA).

Help: For more information, contact D.C.’s Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA).
<https://dcra.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcra/publication/attachments/Building%20Code%20Interpretation%20-%20Fence.pdf>

<https://dcra.dc.gov/service/fence-permit>

STORM WATER: Managing rain gutters’/downspouts’ rainwater such that it does not flow to neighboring properties is the individual homeowner’s responsibility. More specifically, directing your water toward another’s property is a violation of enforceable D.C. regulations.

The District of Columbia Plumbing Code specifies the following:

“All roofs, paved areas, yards, courts and courtyards shall drain into a separate storm sewer system or a combined sewer system, or to an *approved* place of disposal.

Exception: When *approved*, storm water is permitted to be discharged from roofs, paved areas, yards, courts, courtyards, downspouts, rain barrels, cisterns or rooftop storage facilities to vegetated areas such as lawns, gardens, grassy swales or bio-retention cells on the same lot. In such instances, the storm water shall flow away from the building and shall not flow across property lines onto adjacent lots unless it discharges into an approved shared best management practice as defined in 21 DCMR Chapter 5.”

It is legal to drain your property’s storm water to D.C. streets. In such instances, your water flows downhill to neighborhood catch basins, which are designed for that very purpose.

Help:

- Questions or concerns may be directed to the D.C. Department of Energy & Environment.
- Compliance enforcement is the responsibility of the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA).

<https://up.codes/viewer/district-of-columbia/ipc-2012/chapter/11/storm-drainage#11>

TREES: D.C. has strict regulations regarding tree planting, pruning, and removal. Additionally, there are courtesies and laws related to pruning a neighbor’s tree whose branches or roots encroach onto your property. Before picking up a saw, conduct your own research and neighborly coordination.

Help: <https://ddot.dc.gov/page/tree-regulations>

MARIJUANA: CLNPE recommends that before cultivating marijuana plants in your private yard, you consult D.C. officials regarding the legality of outdoor planting.

“If you’re 21 & over, you can possess up to 2 ounces of marijuana, grow up to 6 cannabis plants **in your home** (no more than 3 of which are mature), or give away up to 1 ounce of marijuana to another person that’s at least 21 years old.”

“Under federal law, federal law enforcement officers may arrest anyone in the District for possession of any amount of marijuana.”

The following activities are illegal under D.C. law:

“Smoking, eating, or drinking marijuana – or holding or carrying a lighted roll of paper or other lighted smoking equipment filled with marijuana – in any public space, such as:

- On any street, sidewalk, alley, park, or parking area;
- In a vehicle on any street, alley, park, or parking area; or
- Any place to which the public is invited.”

Help: The D.C. Metropolitan Police Department can address questions or concerns.

www.mpdc.dc.gov/marijuana

[https://mpdc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mpdc/page_content/attachments/Marijuana%20Fact%20Card FEB2015.pdf](https://mpdc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mpdc/page_content/attachments/Marijuana%20Fact%20Card%20FEB2015.pdf)

BASKETBALL and SOCCER GOALS: D.C. law prohibits the positioning of basketball goals, soccer goals, etc. on D.C. public streets. This law’s safety benefits (to motor vehicles, bicyclists, and athletes) are self-evident, and violating households are subject to fines and/or equipment confiscation.

Help:

-- D.C.’s Department of Public Works (DPW) can provide additional information regarding their enforcement role.

-- Our Ward 4 City Councilmember’s office can provide information regarding this particular law.

<https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/sections/22-1308.html>

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES: “Minibikes, ATVs, and dirt bikes are designed for off-road use and may not be driven on city streets, sidewalks, or any other public space within the District of Columbia.”

Help: The D.C. Metropolitan Police Department can answer your questions or concerns.
<https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/minibikes-and-other-small-vehicles>

This bulletin was developed by the Infrastructure Committee of the Civic League of North
Portal Estates, 7/25/2020