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## **Stormwater Safety: Don't Let Your Life Go Down the Drain**

DUBUQUE, Iowa – While the John C. Culver Floodwall protects downtown Dubuque from the Mississippi River, Dubuque is not immune to flooding. As spring rains continue to saturate the tri-state area, the City of Dubuque is reminding residents to be aware of the dangers of stormwater flooding.

Stormwater is rainwater that runs off surfaces such as lawns, roads, roofs, parking lots, and natural ground surfaces. Due to Dubuque's topography, the downtown and other areas of the community are susceptible to stormwater flooding during major rain events when runoff overwhelms the storm sewer system. Such occurrences can transform city streets, tranquil creeks, and normally dry ravines into what can resemble running rivers.

While streets are designed to carry stormwater, flooded streets can contain numerous hazards and should be avoided. Children should never be allowed to play in flooded streets/areas or storm sewers and pets should be kept away as well. Storm sewer drains/inlets are especially dangerous when obscured by water and present a drowning hazard if someone is swept off their feet or sucked into a storm drain. Additionally, manhole covers can become displaced during major rain events and present another hidden hazard under running stormwater. The current and power of running water in these situations should not be underestimated.

Stormwater management basins or ponds, channels, and other drainage structures are also located throughout the city. While not all of these areas are designed to hold water on a continual basis, even these dry ponds and basins can pose a risk of

harm, especially to children, when certain conditions are present during a rain storm. Parents and others are asked to remind children to be cautious around all stormwater management facilities, and children should be instructed not to go in the water. These areas are subject to rapid changes during major rain events and can create hazardous conditions including sudden drop-offs, subsurface currents and the risk of entanglement due to vegetation or debris within the pond or facility. Parents are reminded not to allow their children to play in or around any stormwater management pond or facility, especially after any heavy rainfall or when drainage areas are holding water.

Residents are also reminded they should avoid driving on flooded streets. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), almost half of all flash flood fatalities occur in vehicles. Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling. A foot of water will float many vehicles and two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks.

“The improvements already implemented as part of Dubuque’s drainage basin master plan and the completed and planned Bee Branch watershed improvements will go a long way towards preventing the flooding witnessed with major rain events over the past decade and lessen the impact of all flood events,” said City of Dubuque Civil Engineer Deron Muehring. “However, we all know weather is unpredictable and it’s important that residents are aware of the dangers.”

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