



Sinkhole Fact Sheet

Alachua County Environmental Protection Department
www.alachuacounty.us/depts/epd
Updated June 2012

Sinkholes are a natural and common geologic feature in areas underlain by limestone and other rocks that are dissolved by water. In north-central Florida, sinkholes are formed by solution of near-surface limestone and by collapse of surface materials into underlying cavities in rock. Rapidly forming sinkholes rarely occur under natural conditions. Sinkholes most commonly form in western and central Alachua County, in areas where limestone is exposed or thinly covered by less than 25 feet of permeable sand. Sinkholes are less common where clay-containing materials are over 100 feet thick, such as in eastern Alachua County. Sinkholes have been increasingly common over the past twenty-five years, primarily due to human activities such as groundwater withdrawal, surface water diversion, and pond construction.

Soil and sediment subsidence (sinking) are common during periods of high rainfall, especially when preceded by dry periods. Land subsidence results from a number of factors, one of which is sinkhole development. Common causes of subsidence not related to sinkhole formation include decay of land-clearing debris buried when a structure was built, decay of tree stumps and large roots, leaking water pipes and fittings, cracked and leaking swimming pools, cracked stormwater piping carrying away soil with the stormwater runoff, poor compaction of soil around utility lines, and runoff from roofs, gutters, and pavement.

Sinkhole Warning Signs

- slumping, sagging, and structural failure of a building
- slanting fence posts or other objects
- doors and windows that fail to close properly
- cracks in walls, floors, pavement, and the ground surface,
- pooling of rainfall where it has not previously pooled, or no pooling of rainwater where it usually pools
- sediment in nearby well water

Sinkhole formation must be taken seriously. Life-threatening situations should be immediately reported to the local emergency management agency. Residents should check their home owner's insurance to determine if their policies include sinkhole protection. Not only can sinkholes damage structures, but they can also compromise septic systems and wells. If your drinking water becomes cloudy or colored contact the Alachua County Health Department to have your water tested. A professionally licensed geologist or qualified engineer should evaluate any sinkhole threatening property. A qualified professional should be selected to remedy the problem.

The information in this fact sheet is directed toward newly formed, active sinkhole features. Prominent sinkholes that exist prior to development activities are protected from disturbance or filling and vegetative buffers are required to protect the feature and our groundwater by preserving or restoring a natural condition surrounding the sinkhole. **Remember, sinkholes are a direct link to our drinking water and are not a place for trash, hazardous materials, or unwanted debris.** To learn more about sinkholes visit:

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/geology/feedback/faq.htm> or contact our office at 352-264-6800.

Geologic and Engineering Firms for Sinkhole Investigations

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The following information was supplied by the individual companies or provided by the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department (ACEPD) and is not necessarily a complete list. A firm's absence from this list does not imply prejudice or impropriety. The ACEPD does not endorse any specific consulting company. Users of this list are responsible for ensuring that the services comply with all local, state, and federal laws. The ACEPD cautions individuals to evaluate the services, costs, and licensure status of any company they use. This list is alphabetical, contains mostly local firms, and is subject to change without notice.

<u>Name and Address</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>
AMEC 14420 W. Newberry Road Gainesville, FL 32607	352/332-3318
BTL Engineering Services, Inc. 5802 N. Occident St. Tampa, FL 33614	800-261-0755
CH2MHill 3011 SW Williston Road Gainesville, FL 32608	352/335-7991
Environmental Consulting and Technology (ECT) 3701 NW 98 th Street Gainesville, FL 32606	352/332-0444
GeoHazards, Inc. 1204 NW 13 th St Gainesville, FL 32601	352/371-7243
GeoSolutions, Inc. 601 S. Main Street Gainesville, FL 32601	352/378-7026
GSE Engineering & Consulting, Inc. 5590 SW 64 th Street, Suite B Gainesville, FL 32608	352-377-3233
Universal Engineering Sciences 4475 SW 35 th Terrace Gainesville, FL 32608	352/372-3392