



Department of Utilities & Engineering

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www.ColumbiaSC.Net/Utilities-Engineering

ABOUT WET WEATHER SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS

What does a Sanitary Sewer Overflow Notice mean for customers?

A Sanitary Sewer Overflow Notice means a discharge from the sanitary sewer flowed into the environment. Citizens can protect themselves from this public health concern by avoiding the area near the overflow until it has been cleaned up.

While this notice is a public health and environmental advisory, it should not otherwise affect customers' water or sewer service.

This is a sewer problem. Is it related to my drinking water service?

No. This is not a boil water advisory. For more information on boil water advisories, see www.columbiasc.net/drinking-water/advisories.

This should not affect your drinking water service or the drinking water system in the area.

Why do we get SSOs in wet weather?

When an area has experience a lot of rain, the rain can seep into the sewer system. This causes an increase in the amount of water in the pipes and can cause the system to become overfull. When there is more water in the pipes than they can carry, the water will overflow.

What is the most common factor for where an SSO might happen during wet weather?

Places that seem to have issues tend to be low lying areas. These areas also tend to be close to where it might flood.

How does the rain get into sewer pipes?

During a heavy rain, that water can get into sewer pipes through **infiltration** and **inflow**.

Infiltration is where ground water seeps in through the gaps in our pipes. As pipes get older, they might have more cracks, joints can become separated, sometimes another utility may have bored through our pipe, or the pipe might actually be gone because sewer gases might have eaten it away.

Inflow is when water is flowing directly into the pipes. In some cases this might be through a storm water pipe that is connected to a sewer pipe. We sometimes see those.

Where does the sewer back-up usually go?

It typically comes out of man holes, but it can back up into homes. When that happens, it tends to go into basements, especially low-lying basements that might not be very far above the level of the sewer pipe in that area.

Why this a bigger problem during heavy storms?

Wastewater utilities, like the City of Columbia, are typically built to hand a 2 year storm. When you get storms bigger than that, you have a higher likelihood of seeing an SSO. A 2 year storm is a storm you expect to see every 2 years. This is based on the amount of rain that falls over a given period of time.

What is the City doing to address this?

The City has a comprehensive Capital Improvement Program that includes significant investment in evaluating its entire sewer system and rehabilitating or replacing those areas that need it.

Some technologies that the City uses to evaluate its sewer system include:

- Smoke testing – A non-toxic smoke is blown into a sealed portion of sewer line to identify leaks and cracks.
- Closed circuit television – A camera is remotely driven through sewer lines to identify leaks, cracks, blockages, and other problems.
- Sonar technologies – Two devices are set up at two man holes and the sound waves between them are measured to determine if there is a blockage in the line.

Some technologies that the City uses to rehab or repair its sewer system include:

- Sewer cleaning – Crews cleaned out blocked lines that do not otherwise need repair.
- Cured-in-place lining – A trenchless technology that pushes a sock through an existing, leaking pipe. This sock then hardens into a new, water-tight pipe.
- Pipe bursting – Another trenchless technology where an existing line is burst apart as a new line is pulled through it to replace it.
- Open-cut replacement – A trench is dug to remove an existing line and replace it with a new line.

The City is committed to evaluating its entire sewer system by DATE. Projects are already underway to repair problems found during these evaluations and will continue into the future.