



# Upper Moreland - Hatboro Joint Sewer Authority

*News*

Winter 2023

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The Authority publishes this newsletter to keep its service area customers up to date on important activities and to provide helpful tips.

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**MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER** – The Authority, like our customers, is dealing with the impact of inflation, which has been running as high as 8%. It impacts the Authority in its purchase of gasoline, equipment, chemicals, and other operational items. Although the Authority does everything we can to control costs, the Board of Directors approved a rate increase of 4% on water use fees starting in April 2023 to cover the increased costs of operating and maintaining the plant, while meeting permit requirements. For a minimum user ( $\leq 5,000$  gallons per quarter), this comes to less than \$0.50 per month increase. The last rate increase was in January 2022.

This year's operating budget is \$8,004,650 and the capital improvement budget is \$3,057,000. Some significant capital projects have recently wrapped up and others will continue through next year to achieve Reliability, Redundancy, and Resilience in our operations. The major capital projects that either have just been completed, are ongoing, or are scheduled for next year include:

- Upgraded the electrical, pumping, instrumentation, and HVAC systems of

the main pump house, and replaced 30-year-old equipment.

- Replaced and upgraded the 30-year-old thickeners that perform initial dewatering of the waste from approximately 0.5% to 6% solids.
- Created a pipe inside the pipe (lined) an additional 6,600 feet of sewer main in 2022 to regain integrity against leaks and tree root penetration, and prolong the life of our sewer main. The Authority has lined over 16.6 miles (87,725 feet) of sewer main since 2009.
- Finalizing the design to replace and upgrade the dewatering press system that takes the thickened solids from 6% to 25-30% prior to incineration of the solids at  $\geq 1,300^{\circ}\text{F}$ .
- Fortifying our plant to protect against flooding due to the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events. We worked with FEMA for the reimbursement for expenses incurred from the flooding caused by Tropical Storm Ida in September 2021 and have secured a grant through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Flood Mitigation Program to alleviate future flood-related damage to our plant.

Electrical costs in this energy-intensive industry are a major budget item. The Authority is constantly looking to reduce our carbon footprint in a cost-effective way. New more energy-efficient equipment, LED lighting, and other changes have reduced our

average monthly electrical use by 20% (611,000 to 487,000 KW/month).

Because we operate 24/7 every day of the year, all our modifications/improvements must be performed while the plant is still treating the wastewater. In 2022, the Authority treated over 1,981,368,000 gallons of wastewater, an average of around 5,428,000 gallons per day. Our dedicated staff continues to do an excellent job meeting our permit requirements.

**SEWER BILL PAYMENTS** - Our Administration Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM. Payments may be put in the office mail slot after hours using checks/money orders. Online payments are available by credit/debit card, or from your bank account, through [UMHJSA.MyGovHub.com](http://UMHJSA.MyGovHub.com). Remember that there is a 2% transaction fee when paying by either credit or debit card, which offsets approximately half of the credit card fees charged to the Authority.

Payment can also be made by check through your bank with no fee. Our website ([www.umhjsa.org](http://www.umhjsa.org)) has an online tutorial that guides you through the payment process. **If you are interested in the convenience of receiving your bill by email, please visit our website and use the ecommerce tab.** Note that your quarterly sewer bills reflect water use during the previous 2 to 5 months.

**Do not pay your bill on DOXO.COM, which comes up when you perform a web search for UMHJSA. This for profit, non-approved vendor will delay your payment and charge you additional fees.**

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**ASSISTANCE WITH SEWER BILLS** – The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) administers a fund that supports homeowners in the Commonwealth who

were financially impacted due to the pandemic. This program can assist qualified homeowners for delinquencies on your mortgage and utility bills. The Authority is not involved in the operation of this fund and does not determine eligibility. We do encourage homeowners who are having financial difficulty and are behind on their sewer bill to visit our website for additional information and to obtain an application to send to the Commonwealth.

Additional information can be located at: [www.pahaf.org](http://www.pahaf.org)

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**SEWER BACKING UP?** If your sewer is backing up, call us before you call a plumber. We will evaluate where the problem is for free and advise you what should be done. Call 215-659-1462.

**Sewer Backup Insurance** - It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain the lateral (the pipe that connects your property to our collection system in the street) and safely remove tree roots and other blockages.

**Most home insurance policies do not cover sewer backups.** We strongly recommend that you contact your insurance agent to discuss adding a sewer backup rider to your property's insurance policy. **This insurance is particularly important if you have a fixture in the basement, such as a toilet.** In the event of a sewer backup, a sewer backup rider may mitigate the costs of cleanup and replacement of furnishings.

**Cleanouts** – Please check your lateral (sewer pipe connecting your property to our collection system pipes) for open cleanouts, which are a source of unwanted storm water during heavy rain events. If you need a cap, we will help you get one installed – just call us at 215-659-1462. If you do not have a

cleanout or are considering having one installed, a two-way cleanout proximate to the curb can facilitate removing blockages in the future. Details of the cleanout can be found on our website under FAQ.

**Americans Love Their Toilet Paper** - The pandemic and resulting supply shortages have shown that we love our toilet paper. It has also shown that some people will flush other things if they do not have toilet paper on hand. Sewer plants across the country have had increased maintenance costs from removing wipes from the system. Wipes, even those labeled as flushable, can cause clogs and sewer spills. Toilet paper is the only product safe to flush, and considering the average American family uses around 15 rolls per month, that is a lot of toilet paper.

Please remember to “Keep the Wipes Out of the Pipes,” even though they say “flushable.” Your fellow ratepayers will appreciate it if you move from a “flush it and forget it” to a “toss them, don’t flush them” mindset. It is recommended that you discard these wipes with your regular trash and do not flush them down the toilet.

**Other Items Not to Flush Down the Toilet**  
As with “flushable” wipes, the sewer system is not a magic way to get rid of all your waste. Some material can be toxic to our biological treatment plant (e.g., pesticides) resulting in plant upsets that can last days or products that cannot be treated before they are discharged into the Pennypack Creek (e.g., medications). A general rule of thumb is “if it doesn’t come out of you, it doesn’t belong in the loo.” Only flush the three “Ps” down the toilet: **Pee, Poop** and (toilet) **Paper**.

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**HOW TO DEAL WITH F.O.G.** – F.O.G. stands for Fats, Oils, and Grease that is found in common food and food ingredients

such as meat, butter, cooking oil, sauces, mayonnaise, and food scraps. If not managed properly, F.O.G. solidifies and sticks to the sides of your kitchen drains and sewer pipes. The most common accumulation comes from your daily dishwashing process. Over time, F.O.G. buildup can plug pipes and cause sewer back-ups in your home or business, resulting in costly repairs and maintenance. It also reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of the treatment process.

Here are a few simple steps you can follow at home to help prevent sewer backups: Pour cooled fats, oils and grease into a covered, disposable container and toss it in the garbage. NEVER pour fats, oils or grease down sink drains or toilets. Put the F.O.G. monster on a fat-free diet. **Cool it, contain it, and trash it.**

Soak up remaining fats, oils and grease with a paper towel and dispose of in your garbage. Before you wash dishes, scrape food scraps from your plates, pots, and pans into your garbage.

Clean your sink drains regularly by mixing one-half cup each of baking soda and white vinegar and pouring it down the drain. Wait 15 minutes, then flush thoroughly with hot water.

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**TO GRIND OR NOT TO GRIND** – Not using your kitchen’s garbage disposal can help the environment. While a common modern-day convenience, in-sink household garbage disposals send high concentrations of organic material to the treatment plant and are not the greenest way to dispose of food waste (organics). Grinding food in a garbage disposal adds more solid waste to the incoming load at the wastewater treatment plant. The amount of energy and other resources used to process food waste

disposed in the kitchen sink increases the amount of water, chemicals and energy needed to treat the wastewater.

Households can contribute to the efficiency of the waste management system by composting. Conscientious consumers should consider the “greener” solution and environmentally sound method for disposing of most food waste by bypassing the garbage disposal in favor of composting - all-natural recycling. The practice saves water, reuses nutrients, protects water quality, eases pressure on landfills by keeping organic material out of landfill where methane (a global warming gas) is released, reduces the burden on the wastewater treatment system, and turns kitchen food waste into a useful product that can enrich soil and promote the growth of houseplants, vegetable gardens, etc. Ultimately, the wastewater treatment system is not an environmentally sound substitute for the trash can or a compost pile.

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**SAVE TWICE BY CONSERVING WATER** – You can easily save twice by consuming less water. You can save on your water bill and sewer bill by installing water flow restrictors on faucets and shower heads. The local hardware store sells these devices.

Also, only wash full loads in your clothes washer and dishwasher. Water is a finite resource and we must take care of what we have, as there is no more to replace it!

**LEAKS** - Toilets can be a major source of undetected leaks. To check if your toilet is leaking, especially if you hear the water running from the toilet when not being used:

- Squeeze about 10 drops of non-staining food coloring into your toilet tank.
- Wait about 30 minutes.
- Then check your toilet bowl (not the tank). If you see the color dye in the bowl, you have a leak that should be fixed.

**The Authority has six members of its Board of Directors** – There are three Board Members from both Hatboro and Upper Moreland. The current Board Members are:

Alex Kalnajs, Chairman  
Hank Sokolowski, Vice Chairman  
Bill Tompkins, Secretary  
George Hartman, III, Treasurer  
Dave Kistner, Asst. Treasurer  
Suzanne Dougherty, Asst. Secretary

The Authority appreciates their dedicated service to the community.