



Upper Moreland - Hatboro Joint Sewer Authority

News

Spring/Summer - 2019

This newsletter is published by the Authority to keep its service area customers up-to-date on important activities and to provide helpful tips.

SEWER BILL PAYMENTS: Our Administration Office hours are 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday. Payments may be put in the office mail slot at other times using checks or money orders. Credit card payments can still be made at the office during business hours; however, there is a 2% transaction fee that defers a portion of the fees charged to the Authority. Online payments by credit or debit card, or from your bank account, are available through UMHJSA.MyGovHub.com. Our website (www.umhjsa.org) has an online tutorial that guides you through the process.

Online Payment: We appreciate those customers that are using our e-commerce bill paying system since it started in June 2016. This program allows you to receive your bills online and pay your bills electronically by either credit/debit card or check through your bank on our UMHJSA.MyGovHub.com portal. You can also monitor your account online.

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.

IMPORTANT: Payments must be received by the due date. A 10% penalty will be added to bill payments that are received late.

SEWER BACKING UP? If your sewer is backing up, call us before you call a plumber. We'll evaluate where the problem is for free and advise you what needs to 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 homes from 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 is particularly important if you have a low-lying fixture such as a toilet or shower in the basement. A sewer backup rider may mitigate the costs of cleanup and replacement of furnishings in the event of a sewer backup.**

If your home does not have a cleanout, it is recommended that you install a two-way cleanout on your lateral. The cleanout will allow you to remove blockages and maintain your sewer lateral towards both your home and the main sewer. Tree roots are a continual problem in any sewer system.

Roots in a customer's lateral are the responsibility of the homeowner. Please review our policy at UMHJSA.ORG/FAQ.

SEWER RATES– We anticipate that sewer rates will remain at the January 1, 2017 rate through January 2020 (**3 years without a rate increase**). Although the Authority's labor costs continue to increase and we are continually being required to perform capital improvements to the plant, we are working to reduce operational costs and to keep any future increases to a minimum.

How you are billed for sewer service - The Authority does not receive any funding from the local municipalities - we operate solely on the payments from our customers. The Authority purchases water usage readings from AQUA and bills you for that water use approximately 2 to 4 months later - a May bill will be for water use from approximately January through March. For customers not connected to public water, we base our bills on the number of fixtures in your house or on water usage reported from a professionally installed water meter on your private well - please notify us when a house is connected to public water.

Service Fee - In order to continue to support the Authority's operations, we instituted a customer Service Fee starting on January 1, 2017. This is consistent with the high-fixed cost nature of our business (labor is over 65% of our operating costs) and the pricing models employed by other utilities. Please note that, in conjunction with the institution of the service fee, there has been no increase to the per gallon charges - the same since January 2016.

The Service Fee for residential customers will remain \$9.00 per quarter (\$3/month). These service fees are common in other sewer authorities (Warminster - \$30/quarter, Bucks Co. Water and Sewer - \$71/quarter),

as well as other household utility services (PECO electric - ~\$30/quarter, PECO gas - ~\$35/quarter). The Service Fees for larger-diameter water meters is more, due to their greater impact on our operations. A list of Customer Connection Charges for different meter sizes can be seen on our webpage.

The dangers of Flushable Wipes: Adult personal wipes are not designed to be processed by the sewer system. Even though they say "flushable", they, like disinfection wipes, do not degrade (unlike toilet paper). These are common causes of sewer backups, especially when they combine with grease and/or tree roots in your lateral. The wipes can get stuck in the lateral or sewer main, resulting in hundreds of dollars in repairs. Even if they do not get stuck in the pipes, they cause problems with our removal and disposal of these products. Your fellow ratepayers would appreciate it if customers would move from a "flush it and forget it" to a "toss them, don't flush them" mindset. It is recommended that these get tossed 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 of your waste. Some material can be toxic to our biological treatment plant resulting in upsets, or not treated before they are discharged into the Pennypack Creek. A general rule of thumb is "if it doesn't come out of you, it doesn't belong in the loo." Items that should NEVER be disposed of in the sanitary sewer include:

- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs, which are chemicals and are not treated by our biological plant. They flow through the plant unaffected and are discharged to the Pennypack Creek, where they can impact aquatic life and downstream drinking water supplies.

- Fats, oils and grease that can solidify in laterals and the sewer system as they cool, resulting in blockages.
- Food that can be difficult to treat, making the sewer plant work harder than necessary. Please minimize garbage disposal use and either compost suitable food waste or throw the food debris in the trash. Food run through a garbage disposal increases the plant's energy and disposal costs, and your ultimate bill.
- Coffee grounds and egg shells are good composting items, but can cause excessive equipment wear and failures in our treatment system.
- Motor oil, paint, pesticides, fertilizer, solvents, and other household chemicals can do great harm to the treatment plant's biological process and should be disposed of properly.
- Cat litter, which can swell and clog your lateral.
- Contact lenses, although shredded during the treatment process, become micro-plastic pollution in our water ways, possibly entering the food chain.
- Condoms and tampons.

Cured-In-Place Pipe (CIPP) - Since 2009, the Authority has aggressively used CIPP (pipe lining system) to repair our aging 125 miles of collection system pipe, with some of these pipes being up to 90-years old. This process will keep tree roots out of our pipes and reduce the infiltration and inflow into the plant. Reducing the amount of "clean" water that enters during rain and high-water events and requires treatment is critical to the Authority's performance. We will spend over \$650,000 this year to line over 19,000 feet of pipe, bringing our total to around 72,340 feet (13.7 miles) of cracked/leaking pipe in the past 11 years. The CIPP program for this year is anticipated to occur between May and June.

High Flows – It has been a very wet year in our area. We had around 72 inches of precipitation in 2018, which is more than the average of 48 inches annually. This has resulted in significant flows to our plant, due to high ground water tables and other factors. Our plant is permitted at 7.189 million gallon per day (MGD), but can go from 5.5 MGD to 16 MGD instantaneous flow within several hours of a heavy rain event. Despite these excessive flows to the plant, our dedicated staff has been able to meet our PADEP permit limits and handled the flows extremely well.

Plant Upgrades – The Authority has spent approximately \$1,650,000 to upgrade our grit collection system, which has improved our ability to remove rags, debris and stones from the wastewater as it enters our plant. This has resulted in plant efficiencies and reduced wear and tear on other mechanical systems, such as pumps.

Due to the age of the plant, we have a lot of electrical equipment and wiring that are over 50 years old. We spent over \$300,000 upgrading and replacing this aging equipment to mitigate against operational failure. We estimate another \$1,300,000 will be spent this year to replace aging odor control equipment, pumping systems and installing bypass equipment. These capital improvements are significantly enhancing the plant's operations and reliability.

We are working to implement additional upgrades to provide quality service to our customers, improve operations/safety at the plant, and to meet PADEP permit limits.

Redundancy - Typically the word "redundant" refers to something excessive or unnecessary. However, with sewage systems, redundancy is important for

operation and maintaining safe water quality in the case of equipment failure.

Redundancy at the Authority includes backup generators for power outages, valves and multiple pumps for equipment failures, and multiple settling and aeration basins for cleaning and maintenance.

Not only does redundant equipment provide backup, but it also provides a way to maintain the equipment more readily - keeps a system working while taking the other piece of equipment out of service. It can also extend the useful life of equipment. For example, alternating pump cycles on a pumping system reduces wear and tear and allows the Authority to better plan for replacement costs.

Energy Efficiency – Over the last several years, the Authority has invested significantly in energy-efficient equipment to replace aging equipment. We have also invested over \$40,000 in new LED lights to improve lighting. These improvements have helped reduce our electric bill by over 25% in the last 4 years, saving the Authority over \$130,000/year.

Cell Tower - Verizon Wireless completed the installation of their cell tower on our property last spring, which has improved the coverage to the surrounding community.

Board Members - The Authority would like to express our thanks to George Lewis for his service to the Authority and the community. George represented Hatboro on the Board for over 29 years and he will be missed. The current Board Members are:

Alex Kalnajs, Chairman
Kent Nelson, Vice Chairman
Hank Sokolowski, Secretary
George Hartman, III, Treasurer
Bill Tompkins, Ass't Secretary
Pat Battaglia, Ass't Treasurer

The Authority is manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our dedicated staff of 45 employees does a great job of treating the wastewater, protecting the environment, and maintaining the excellent treatment in all weather conditions. Our key staff includes:

Eric Lindhult, General Manager
Dave Thomas, Superintendent
Kathy Duffy, Office Manager