



Upper Moreland - Hatboro Joint Sewer Authority

News

Spring/Summer - 2020

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 Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM. **However, the office is closed until further notice for bill paying due to the ongoing Covid-19 concerns.** Payments may be put in the office mail slot using checks/money orders. Credit card payments will be accepted at the office when it reopens. Online payments are available by credit/debit card, or from your bank account, through UMHJSA.MyGovHub.com. Remember that there is a 2% transaction fee when paying by credit card, which offsets a portion of the fees charged to the Authority. Our website (www.umhjsa.org) has an online tutorial that guides you through the payment process. 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.

Online Payment - We appreciate those customers that are using our e-commerce bill paying system, which 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. If you are interested in the convenience of receiving your bill by email, please visit our website and use the ecommerce tab.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC – During the pandemic, everyone's life has been impacted in many ways and it has negatively impacted the operations at the Authority. We would like to say thanks to our dedicated staff who continue to operate our wastewater plant and treat the water to a quality that is better than the limits required by our permit. They continue to perform this essential and critical work for our customers.

We recognize the impact that this pandemic has had on our customers. If you have been impacted economically and have problems paying your sewer bill, please contact us.

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 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 fixture such as a toilet or shower in the basement. In the event of a sewer backup, a sewer backup rider may mitigate the costs of cleanup and replacement of furnishings.

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 usage rates will remain at the January 1, 2016 rate through January 2021 (**5 years without a usage 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.

Service Fee – The Authority's residential service fee was increased from \$3/month to \$4/month in January 2020 (\$12/quarter). This fee was instituted in January 2017 in order to continue to support the Authority's operations. 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.

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 are 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.

KEEP WIPES OUT OF PIPES - During the start of the pandemic, the news was filled with stories about toilet paper shortages. This situation resulted in the increased use of adult or baby wipes, along with paper towels and other material.

Adult personal wipes and baby wipes, along with disinfecting wipes, are not designed to be processed by the sewer system. Even though they say "flushable," they impair the proper functioning of the sewer system (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 wipes 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. Once in the creek, they can negatively 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 eggshells 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.

So, what is OK to flush down the drain? The list is noticeably short. Only flush urine, feces, and toilet paper. Put the rest of the garbage in the trash!

Brief History of UMHJSA – The Borough of Hatboro and Upper Moreland Township began formal discussion in 1928 to build a central sewage treatment plant for their

expanding communities. The original plant was built to accommodate approximately 1,000 homes, with a capacity of 600,000 gallons per day (gpd). It began operation in 1931. The collection system consisted of approximately 3 miles of interceptor lines and 16 miles of sewer mains, which served the densely populated sections of the communities.

As the communities grew, so did the need for additional capacity in the sewage treatment plant, the municipalities formed the Upper Moreland-Hatboro Joint Sewer Authority in 1953. The plant was expanded to treat 2,600,000 gpd and the collection system expanded to 64 miles of sewer lines.

The plant was expanded in 1974 and upgraded in 1989. The current plant is rated with a capacity of 7,189,000 gpd and has approximately 125 miles of sewer pipes that UMHJSA maintains.

Along with Hatboro and Upper Moreland, UMHJSA serves eastern Horsham Township and portions of Upper Dublin and Warminster Townships, and Bryn Athyn Borough.

Plant Upgrades – The Authority continues to replace equipment in the plant and repair structures – some of which date back to the original 1931 plant. We are currently installing a bypass pump system to assist in handling the high volume of water during major storm events and bypass the main influent pump station. This upgrade will facilitate work scheduled on the pump station next year.

We continue to use cured-in-place pipe (CIPP) to line existing damage pipes. The Authority has used CIPP to line over 14 miles of our 125 miles of aging pipe. The CIPP process will reduce the volume of

groundwater infiltrating our pipes and add years of service to the sewer mains. During severe storm events, UMHJSA can treat up to 16,000,000 gpd and still meet permit limits, but this excessive flow is detrimental to the plant's operations. We are working hard to keep "clean" water out of our system, which is why sump pump discharges into the sewer are illegal.

Aging odor control equipment and other critical equipment are being replaced or upgraded to comply with Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection requirements, and/or to significantly enhance the plant's operations and reliability. Capital expenses are estimated to exceed \$3,000,000 this year.

Public Meetings – Due to the pandemic, the Board of Directors will be holding virtual public meetings in accordance with Pennsylvania Act 15. If you would like to participate in the virtual public meeting, please visit our website for details.

Board Members - The Authority would like to express our thanks to Kent Nelson for his service to the Authority and the community. Kent represented Upper Moreland on the Board for over 16 years and he will be missed. The current Board Members are:

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

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

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