



# Upper Moreland - Hatboro Joint Sewer Authority

*News*

Spring/Summer - 2021

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This newsletter is published by the Authority 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** - I remember when the phrase 20/20 use to make me think of perfect vision. For most of us, it will always make us think of the coronavirus and how it affected all our lives; from impacting jobs and businesses to remote work/schooling to reduced interaction with family and friends. Last year (and the start of this year) has been like none other in my lifetime with all the disruption. I would like to first recognize and thank all the hard working and dedicated members of the UMHJSA Team for their service to you, our customers. As an organization that provides an essential and basic service to our community, the UMHJSA staff has continued to work around the clock through the various stages of this pandemic ensuring that your wastewater is properly treated and meets all the regulatory requirements.

This has been a difficult time for our community and region. Due to the current economic condition, the Board of Directors decided to hold the rate per 1,000 gallons of water use at the \$6.77 for residential customers. This rate, which has not increased since 2016, along with the nominal service fee, makes our rates well below average for sewer rates in the area.

Recognizing the current economic situation, the Authority discontinued penalties and late fees for overdue accounts and did not pursue water service terminations for customers who have not paid since 2019. However, as the economy improves, we anticipate reinstating penalties and water service terminations for delinquent customers in the future. If you receive a notice, feel free to call our front office to set up a payment schedule until you can pay off the full balance.

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**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. Remember that there is a 2% transaction fee when paying by credit card, which offsets approximately half of the fees charged to the Authority. Our website ([www.umhjsa.org](http://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.

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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 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 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 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.

**KEEP WIPES OUT OF PIPES** - During the pandemic, we have seen an increased use of adult or baby wipes, along with paper towels and other material. These materials 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 will appreciate it 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 resulting in upsets, or cannot be 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 cannot be 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 through a garbage disposal that can be difficult to treat, making the sewer plant work harder than necessary – see the next section.

- 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 waterways, possibly entering the food chain.
- Condoms and tampons.

So, what is OK to flush down the drain? The list is noticeably short. Only flush the three "Ps" down the toilet: Pee, Poops and (toilet) Paper.

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**TO GRIND OR NOT TO GRIND** – As noted above, 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 water resources used to process food waste disposed in the kitchen sink is counterproductive to conservation efforts. Ultimately, more solid waste entering the wastewater treatment plant increases the amount of water, chemicals and energy needed to treat.

Households can contribute to the efficiency of the waste management system by composting. Conscientious consumers should consider the "greener" solution and

most environmentally-sound method for disposing of 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, trees, lawns, flowers and vegetable gardens. Ultimately, the wastewater treatment system is not an environmentally-sound substitute for the trash can or a compost pile.

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**SUMP PUMP INSPECTIONS** - The PA Department of Environmental Protection, says ground water is disallowed in sanitary sewer systems, and is illegal in Upper Moreland Township and Hatboro Borough to introduce groundwater into the sanitary sewer system. Sump pumps are jeopardizing our sewer system and threaten to increase your sewer rates. During some rainfalls, the flow through our system exceeds its capacity and, although the amount of water from each individual sump pump seems small, the flow of several hundred pumps can cause an overload to the system. If your sump pump is connected to our system either directly or through a laundry tub, please contact us.

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**SAVE TWICE BY CONSERVING WATER** - It is rare these days to save twice by consuming less, but you can easily do it yourself. 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 dish and clothes washer. Remember that water is a finite resource and we must take care of what we have, as there is no more to replace it!

**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 completed a \$1,450,000 installation of an influent 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 overhaul of the main influent pump station this year.

We continue to use cured-in-place pipe (CIPP) to line existing damaged pipes to reduce the volume of groundwater infiltrating our pipes and add years of service to the sewer mains. The Authority has used CIPP to line over 15.2 miles of our 125 miles of aging pipe and spent over \$1,640,000 on CIPP in the past 6 years. During severe storm events, flow to the UMHJSA can increase up to five-fold in a day (e.g., treat over 20,000,000 gallons per day). Although we still meet permit limits, this excessive flow is detrimental to the plant's operations.

Aging odor control equipment, our 29-year-old sludge thickeners, and other critical equipment are being replaced or upgraded to comply with regulatory requirements, and/or to enhance the plant's operations and reliability. Capital expenses are estimated to exceed \$7,000,000 in 2020 and 2021.

## **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES -**

Due to upcoming retirements, the Authority anticipates job openings in our front office and plant operations staff. Applications can be found at [www.UMHJSA.org/links](http://www.UMHJSA.org/links).

**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.

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 44 employees do a great job of treating the wastewater, protecting the environment, processing payments, and maintaining the excellent treatment in all weather conditions.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Richard (Matt) Kramer, who retired this year. Our key staff includes:

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