

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: December 19, 2024

TO: Honorable John S. Lee, Chair
Honorable Bob Blumenfield, Vice Chair
Honorable Imelda Padilla, Member
Public Works Committee

FROM: Barbara Romero, Director and General Manager
LA Sanitation and Environment



SUBJECT: SEWER OVERFLOW INCIDENT PREVENTION AND MITIGATION - (CF# 24-0887)

This report is in response to a City Council motion ([CF# 24-0887](#)), dated August 2, 2024, directing LA Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) to report on the cause of the sewer line rupture and subsequent sewage spill at 2700 South Cresta Place, which occurred on July 20, 2024, as well as how LASAN and the Department of Water and Power (LADWP) coordinate and share information to prevent and mitigate spills, in addition to infrastructure upgrades that are needed.

Background

On Saturday, July 20, 2024 at 2:19 PM, LASAN's Clean Water Conveyance Division (CWCD) received a report of a maintenance hole overflowing at 2700 South Cresta Place. A CWCD crew arrived at the incident location at 3:07 PM and determined that the 8-inch main line sewer serving the referenced area had backed up due to a blockage. Based upon the quantity of water and debris in the pipe, it was determined by CWCD that runoff from an upstream LADWP water main break flowed into the sanitary sewer line and resulted in the reported overflow. The CWCD crew proceeded to remove the blockage and the backup ceased at 3:40 PM.

Approximately 15,967 gallons of water flowed from the sewer maintenance hole onto the street as a result of the blockage. The crew was able to establish containment and captured 62 gallons of water, returning it to the sewer system. The remaining 15,905 gallons of water entered an adjacent County of Los Angeles catch basin located at 10301 West Cresta Drive, which is tributary to Ballona Creek. This incident is classified as a Category I Sanitary Sewer Overflow by the State Water Resources Control. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health was notified and later determined that the overflow did necessitate a beach closure.

It is important to note that while the spill was classified as a Category 1 spill, the water quality test results indicated that there was no environmental impact due to the spill. The fecal indicator bacteria densities were equivalent to baseline levels and did not indicate the presence of sewage. This is likely due to the fact that the spill primarily

consisted of potable water from the LADWP water line. As a result, the precautionary beach closure was ended once the water quality results were provided.

LADWP performed an independent assessment after the incident which is documented in **Attachment A**. LADWP's position is that no sanitary sewer overflow occurred and only potable water entered Ballona Creek.

It should also be noted that in fiscal year 2023-2024, LASAN experienced an average of 1.15 spills per 100 miles of sewer pipe. This is significantly less than the latest state average of 2.83 spills per 100 miles of sewer pipe, which can be attributed to LASAN's preventive maintenance program.

LASAN and LADWP have a comprehensive plan to coordinate efficient responses to sanitary sewer spills that may be caused by LADWP main breaks, piping installation, spill prevention, and mediation of sewer spills related to excessive water overflow.

In the event that there is a broken LADWP water main or if any work performed by LADWP or its contractors causes a sanitary sewer overflow or damage to Clean Water Conveyance infrastructure, LADWP must contact the CWCD at 213-485-7575. Staff is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The notification must include:

1. Address/location of the event
2. Details of the event
3. Immediate impact to private property caused by this event

The LASAN CWCD Sanitary Sewer Overflow response procedures are as follows:

Sanitary Sewer System – Damage And Spill Response And Reporting Procedures

In June 2023, the latest State Water Resources Control Board Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for Sanitary Sewer Systems became effective. As a part of those requirements, every owner of a sanitary sewer system greater than one mile in length is required to apply for a permit and designate a legally responsible official to oversee the operation, maintenance, compliance and management of their sewer system. In accordance with the WDRs, the Department of Public Works' Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN) is designated as the legally responsible agency for the City of Los Angeles' public sanitary sewer system.

As the legally responsible agency to comply with all permits and regulations, sewer damages, overflows and back-ups related to the sewer system require immediate attention and must be reported to LASAN immediately. This includes accidental damage to sewers as part of any City Department's construction or operational activities.

In the event that any City crews or contractors inadvertently damage a sewer or cause a backup or overflow, it is essential that the following procedures be followed:

- If sewer damage occurred but flow is continuing, don't perform any bypass operation or attempt repair until LASAN has been notified and is on the scene.
- If sewer overflow is occurring or is imminent, implement immediate sewer spill

containment procedures to prevent and/or minimize sewage from reaching the storm drain system and waterways.

- If the sewer overflow reaches the storm drain system, then the CWCD will notify the State Office of Emergency Services, State Department of Health Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, LASAN Environmental Monitoring Division, Heal The Bay and the National Response Center immediately after becoming aware of the incident, as outlined in the Sanitary Overflow Response and Reporting Procedure Manual. In order to avoid any confusion, all overflow volume estimates will be provided by LASAN staff.

As soon as the LASAN CWCD is on the scene, they will take over all sewer related activities. Other City crews will provide any assistance and support that is needed from the Clean Water Conveyance Division.

- If the sewer is damaged, the CWCD will assess the extent of the damage to the sewer and will mobilize sewer contractor(s) through the Bureau of Engineering's emergency sewer repair on-call list. The sewer repair will follow the City's standard specifications and is subject to the Bureau of Contract Administration's inspection.

Impact of Approved Sewer Rate Adjustment

The recently approved sewer service charge rate revenue adjustment will allow LASAN to hire additional staff to continue performing the preventive, proactive and predictive maintenance of the sewer infrastructure to ensure optimum performance. The adjustment will also allow LASAN to perform more condition assessment using Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) to determine the structural condition of the pipes and to take appropriate repair measures to prevent pipe failure and eliminate sewer overflows. Lastly, the additional revenues will enable identified pipe repairs and rehabilitation to happen in a timely manner to avoid failures which can lead to sanitary sewer overflow.

ATTACHMENT A



BUILDING A STRONGER L.A.

Karen Bass, Mayor

Board of Commissioners

Richard Katz, President

George S. McGraw, Vice President

Nurit D. Katz

Mia Lehrer

Wilma J. Pinder

Chante L. Mitchell, Secretary

Janisse Quiñones, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Engineer

September 23, 2024

Julie Allen
Assistant Director
Los Angeles Sanitation & Environment
Julie.allen@lacity.org

Dear Ms. Allen:

Subject: LADWP's Assessment of 2700 South Cresta Place Reported Sewer Overflow Incident

Background

On Saturday July 20, 2024, Los Angeles Sanitation (LASAN) received a report of an overflowing maintenance hole at 2700 South Cresta Place at 2:19 p.m. as outlined in the overflow sewer report (Attachment #1). Two minutes later, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) Water Trouble Board received a report of a leak at 2721 Club Drive (Attachment #2). Initial reports of this incident raised concerns regarding impact to the Ballona Creek watershed and led to subsequent beach closures one mile north and south of Ballona Creek including Playa Del Rey and southern parts of Venice Beach. This report is in response to the Council Motion (Attachment #3) set forth by Council District 11, dated August 2, 2024, in response to the incident.

Initial Claims

At the time of the incident, LASAN first responders reported that the sewer overflow resulted from excessive water inflow from the broken water mainline which reportedly pushed sand into the sanitary sewer system causing a blockage and resulting in 15,000 gallons of sewage overflowing and draining into nearby catch basins.

Assessment and Findings

LADWP's assessment and investigation of the incident did not yield findings that substantiate the initial claims. Water runoff from the water main break could not have introduced enough water or debris into the sewer system without either a pre-existing break in the sewer line or the removal of the cover over the reported overflowing maintenance hole. During LADWP's repair efforts on the broken water mainline, no repairs or breaks were reported in the sewer line and LADWP did not remove the cover.

Additionally, the location of the reported sewer overflow (34°02'29.2"N 118°24'25.0"W) was observed to be flat with minimal gradation to facilitate drainage. This finding makes it very likely that ponding from the water main leak runoff occurred over the sewer maintenance hole. This ponding could have been easily misconstrued as an overflowing sewer system. Also, LASAN's water sampling indicated that no sewage was released and the runoff to the catch basins was

fresh water. LASAN also indicated that the sewer line could not carry a capacity of 15,000 gallons of sewage even within a two-week period which is the reported volume of sewage overflow. Given these two findings, it is very unlikely that the sewer overflowed and that the water was indeed our surface water leak.

It should also be noted that the maintenance hole that was reported to overflow occurred three maintenance holes upstream of the reported blockage. The sewer flow at this location operates as an open channel and is gravity-fed. Based on hydraulic principles, it would be expected that maintenance holes 51911073 and 51911046, which are at lower elevations, would have also overflowed. LADWP prepared a summary map of the incident (attachment #4).

Conclusion

LADWP's findings, following a thorough assessment of the incident, has led to the conclusion that only potable water entered Ballona Creek and sewer overflow due to the water main leak was highly unlikely. The overflow of the sewer system that was observed is more likely ponding of potable water from the main leak that pooled prior to reaching a catch basin due to poor drainage fronting 2700 South Cresta Place. It is standard operating procedure for LADWP construction crews to immediately contact LASAN in the event of any sewer damage or suspected sewer overflow. LADWP reviewed the *DRAFT Sewer Overflow Incident Prevention and Mitigation* document prepared by Kwasi Berko and Gerald Watson (Attachment #5) and we have no comments nor objections to the standard operating procedures as outlined.

If you have any questions, please contact Nathaniel Bautista, District Engineering Manager – Metro, at Nathaniel.Bautista@ladwp.com or at (213) 367-1151.

Sincerely,



J. Bart King, P.E.
Manager of Engineering
Water Distribution Division

RV:md

Attachments

c: Kwasi Berko, LASAN
Tristen Marler, LASAN
Marisela Reyes, LASAN
Gerald Watson, LASAN
Paul Habib, LADWP
Fredy Ceja, LADWP
Breonia L. Lindsey, LADWP
John A. Cox, LADWP
Eduardo Lopez, LADWP
Nathaniel Bautista, LADWP
Rafael Viramontes, LADWP

Job ID	429133	Job Type	Water System - Check Leak Source in Street	Job Status	Complete
Event ID	10583248779208	Trouble Type	Customer Call		

Location	Address	Caller Details		
	2721 CLUB DR			
	2721			
	CLUB DR			
	90064			
			Caller Name	CHARLES BENSON
			Contact No	(818) 445-1111
			Meter No.	90064
			Meter Size	

Information from Customer	07-20-2024 14:21	POSSIBLE MAIN BREAK. WATER LEAKING IN STREET. GUSHING AND BUBBLING THROUGH CRACKS. RIGHT BEHIND RANCHO PARK OFF OF MOTOR DRIVE. by MONET GONZALES	eRespond
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Task Details					
Task Type	Planned Start	Planned Finish	Actual Start	Actual Finish	Crew Dispatched
WD - Investigate Leak				07-21-2024 04:35	

Repair/Completion Details		
Root Cause		
Repair Carried Out		
Restoration Time		

Replacement Meter Details			
Replacement Meter ID		Meter Size	Meter Reading

Leak/Burst Asset Details			
Pipe Diameter		Pipe Thickness	Pipe Material
Lining		Joint	Age

Water Quality Field Inspection Details			
Sample Location 1			
pH	Free CL2	Total CL2	
Conductivity	Temperature		
Sample Location 2			
pH	Free CL2	Total CL2	
Conductivity	Temperature		

Signature:

Date:

Job ID	429133	Job Type	Water System - Check Leak Source In Street	Job Status	Complete
Event ID	10583248779208	Trouble Type	Customer Call		

Location	Address	Caller Details		
	2721 CLUB DR			
	2721			
	CLUB DR			
	90064			
			Caller Name	CHARLES BENSON
			Contact No	(818) 445-1111
			Meter No.	90064
			Meter Size	

Impact					
Premises Impacted	0	Priority Customers Impacted	0	Key Account Customers Impacted	0
Start Time	07-20-2024 14:21	Pressure Zone		Root Asset	
ETR	07-21-2024 01:20				

Notes			
Note Type	Date/Time	Remarks	User ID
Closed Reason	07-21-2024 04:35	@ 04:32: PER 287/ZAPATA—FND A SPLIT ON THE MAIN; REPLACED 14 FT OF PIPE; BACKFILLED, TEMP OILED, CLEANED UP AND LEFT SAFE. JOB IS COMPLETE. OK TO CLOSE.	jquin2
Work Status Updates	07-21-2024 04:34	@ 01:20: PER 261/GONZALES—WATER IS BACK IN SVC; RELEASED ALL TAGS.	jquin2
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 21:02	@2058 HRS; NOTIFIED 260/C. TORRES.	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 21:02	@2057 HRS; C/O 261/T. GONZALEZ; ACCEPTED C/O	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 21:02	@2054 HRS; PER 260/C. TORRES; C/O 261/T.GONZALEZ; TO RELIEVE 267/ELIZALDE.	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 18:37	@1631 HRS; NTB OPR MLEMUS CALLED 260/C. TORRES & REQUESTED LOTO TAGS (011-013)APPROVAL; APPROVAL GIVEN.	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 18:37	@1629 HRS; PER 287/R. ELIZALDE NEEDS 3 LOTO TAGS; GB#127-162; GV# 146, 150 & 144.	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:29	@1618 HRS; CONAD; LEFT VM MSG	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:29	@1616 HRS; GAS CO/LETTY—RCVD USA TICKET	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:29	@1614 HRS; POWER/WYATT- EMERGENCY MARK/LOCATE	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:29	@1600 HRS; CREATED & SENT HALF-SHEET	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:29	@1558 HRS; CREATED & SENT LAFD TT MSG27715	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:29	@1550 HRS; PER 280/LUCERO; 286/J. GONZALEZ & CREW WILL HOLD OVER TO WORK ON THIS LEAK.	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:14	USA TICKET # B242020150 EXP: 08/17/2024	mlemus
Work Status Updates	07-20-2024 16:13	@1549 HRS; PER 287/ZAPATA; BETTER ADDRESS IS 2721 CLUB DR; 8" CI MAIN SHUT-OFF ON CLUB DR FROM CRESTA DR TO MONTE MAR DR; 19 SVCS IMPACTED; 1 F/H @ 2721 CLUB DR; MARKED FOR USA; RESTORATION: 8 HRS.	mlemus
Event Notes	07-20-2024 14:45	Job 429133 created on 07-20-2024 14:45, Job Type: Water System - Check Leak Source In Street	eRespond

BB

PUBLIC WORKS

MOTION

On Saturday, July 20, 2024, there was a sewer overflow incident that occurred near 2700 South Cresta Place. The Bureau of Sanitation (BOS) were notified of the matter and proper BOS staff responded to contain the spillage, assess the damage, and affect the necessary repairs.

The City crew determined that an 8-inch main line sewer serving the area had backed up due to a blockage, which was caused by a Department of Water and Power (DWP) water main break. The water main break caused the sewer to collapse from the excessive water inflow. However, before full containment, it was determined that over 15,000 gallons of untreated sewage spilled, and even though the containment team was able to capture some and return it to the sewer system, the remaining sewage entered the Ballona Creek through a catch basin. The BOS notified the County of Los Angeles' Department of Public Health and the State Water Resources Control Board about the spill.

Media reports regarding the incident warned beachgoers to avoid the water and wet sand within a one-mile radius of the Ballona Creek because the spill reached the Ballona Creek and made its way to the Pacific Ocean between Playa Del Rey and Venice Beach. This incident is very concerning given it is just one of many spills that have recently occurred due to failing infrastructure. Further, its impact on the health and safety of local residents and summertime beachgoers, as well as the long-term environmental harm to the Ballona Creek is of deep worry.

It is very important that BOS and DWP report on the incident, its cause, their response and the potential regulatory impacts the City may face. The BOS should be prepared to explain how their recent request for sewer rate-adjustments addresses community concerns and ensures transparency. It will also help the City coordinate more efficient responses to future environmental hazards with our regional jurisdictional partners.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council direct the Bureau of Sanitation (BOS), and request the Department of Water and Power (DWP), to report on the cause of the sewer line rupture and subsequent sewage spill at 2700 South Cresta Place which occurred on July 20, 2024. The report should also address how the BOS and the DWP coordinate and share information to prevent and mitigate spills, in addition to infrastructure upgrades that are needed.

PRESENTED BY: Traci Park

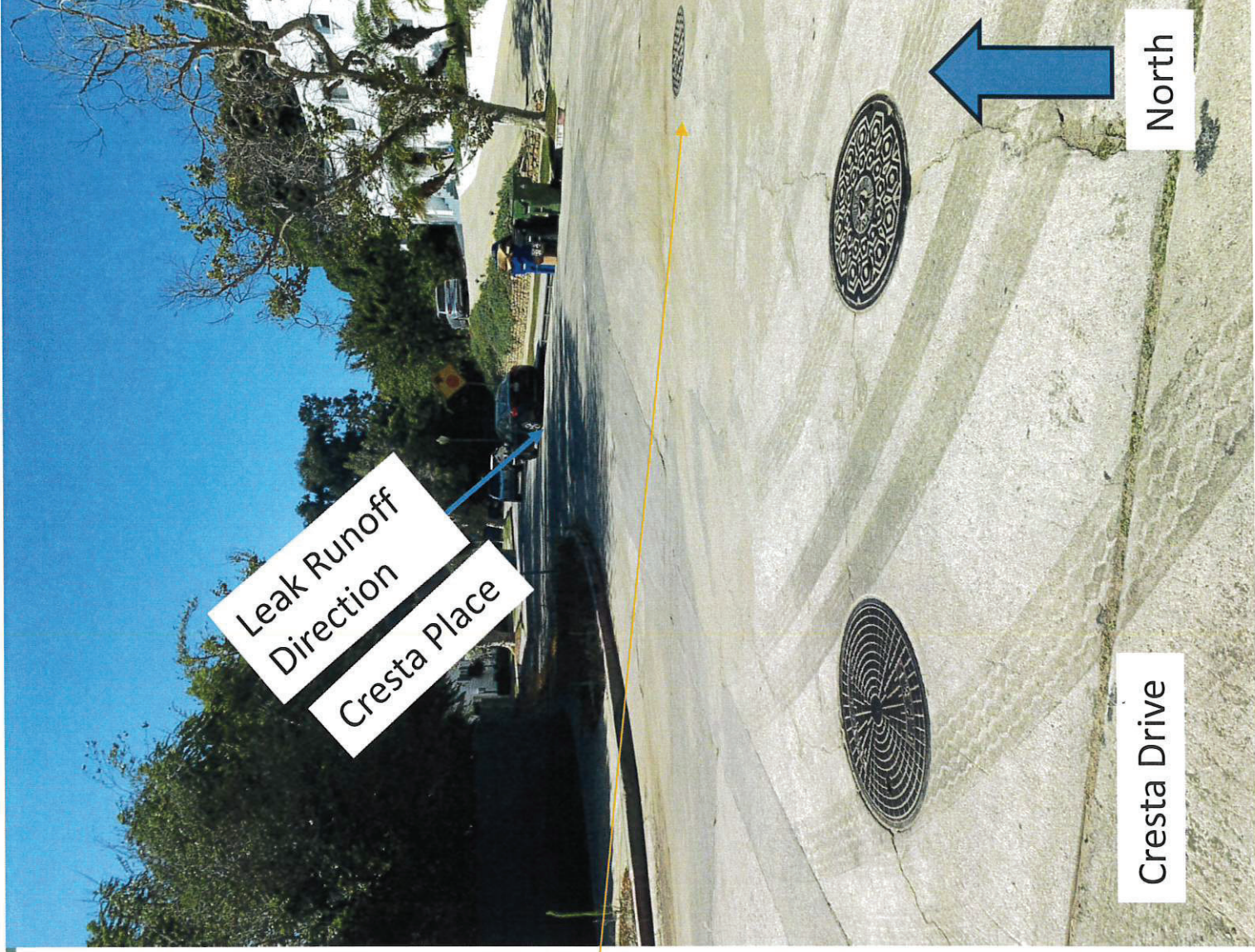
TRACI PARK

Councilwoman, 11th DistrictSECOND BY: Katy Yandlinsky

AUG 02 2024

LADWP & LASAN Incident





Debris Accumulated around Sewer maintenance. Indication of ponding.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE**DATE:** August 6, 2024**TO:** Julie Allen, Assistant Director
LA Sanitation & Environment**FROM:** Kwasi Berko, Division Manager
Clean Water North Conveyance DivisionGerald Watson Division Manager
Clean Water South Conveyance Division**SUBJECT: SEWER OVERFLOW INCIDENT PREVENTION AND MITIGATION**

The following is a plan that has been prepared to address the issues of DWP water main breaks/failures and piping installation, spill prevention and mediation of sewer spills related to excessive water overflow.

In the event of a broken DWP water main or any other work performed by DWP or its contractors that cause a sanitary sewer overflow or damage to Clean Water Conveyance infrastructure, DWP must contact the Clean Water Conveyance Division at 213-485-7575. We have staff on-call 24-7 year round.

In the case of a sanitary sewer overflow or related sewer pipeline damage caused by DWP or its contractor, CWCD requests that the following actions take place when possible:

1. Notify CWCD ASAP
2. Give address/location of the event
3. Provide details of the event
4. Describe immediate impact to private property caused by this event

LA Sanitation & Environment Clean Water Conveyance Division Sanitary Sewer Overflow response procedures are as follows:

SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM – DAMAGE AND SPILL RESPONSE AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

In June 2023, the latest State Water Resources Control Board Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for Sanitary Sewer Systems became effective. As a part of those requirements, every owner of a sanitary sewer system greater than one mile in length is required to apply for a permit and designate a legally responsible official to oversee the operation, maintenance, compliance and management of their sewer system. In accordance with the WDRs, the Department of Public Works' Bureau of Sanitation (Sanitation) is designated as the legally responsible agency for the City of Los Angeles' public sanitary sewer system.

As part of the City's commitment to protect the public health and the environment, and to comply with all permits and regulations, please be advised that all sewer damages, overflows and back-ups related to the sewer system require immediate attention and must be reported to Sanitation immediately. This includes accidental damage to sewers as part of your Department's construction or operational activities.

In the event that any DWP crews or contractors inadvertently damage a sewer or cause a backup or overflow, it is essential that the following procedures be followed:

If sewer damage occurred but flow is continuing, don't perform any bypass operation or attempt repair until Sanitation has been notified and is on the scene.

If sewer overflow is occurring or is imminent, implement immediate sewer spill containment procedures to prevent and/or minimize sewage from reaching the storm drain system and waterways.

Immediately notify the LA Sanitation & Environment Clean Water Conveyance Division of the sewer related problem and the urgency of the problem at the telephone numbers indicated below to take the necessary actions, including regulatory and compliance reporting. Please inform Sanitation if an overflow is occurring or is imminent.

Office	Address	Work Hours	Phone No.
CWCD Main Operation Headquarters	2335 Dorris Place, LA 90031	6:30 AM – 4:00 PM	(213) 485-7575
Swing Shift Divisions 381 And 383	2335 Dorris Place, LA 90031	3:30 PM – 1:00 AM	(213) 485-7575
Venice Pumping Plant	140 Hurricane Avenue, Venice 90293	24-hour emergency Daily	(310) 823-5507 (310) 822-0777

If the sewer overflow reaches the storm drain system, then the Clean Water Conveyance Division will notify the State Office of Emergency Services and the National Response Center within 15 minutes of becoming aware of the incident. All other agencies will be notified by the LA Sanitation & Environment Clean Water Conveyance Division. In order to avoid any confusion, all overflow volume estimates will be provided by Bureau of Sanitation staff.

As soon as LA Sanitation & Environment Clean Water Conveyance Division is on the scene, Clean Water Conveyance Division will take over all sewer related activities. DWP crews will provide any assistance and support that is needed from Clean Water Conveyance Division.

If the sewer is damaged, Clean Water Conveyance Division will assess the extent of the damage to the sewer and will mobilize sewer contractor(s) through the Bureau of Engineering's emergency sewer repair on-call list. The sewer repair will follow City's standard specifications and is subject to the Bureau of Contract Administration's

inspection.

All related costs associated with the damaged sewer including repair may be back charged to DWP.

Please implement these procedures immediately and communicate with all your field crews and construction personnel/contractors.

GFW/KB: