

OPEN CHANNEL NEWS

News bulletin from Metropolitan Council Environmental Services



April 2022 - Issue #59

Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) is one of five divisions of the Metropolitan Council, a regional public agency working for the seven-county metropolitan area. The mission of MCES is to provide wastewater services and integrated planning to ensure sustainable water quality and water supply for the region.

The Industrial Waste & Pollution Prevention (IWPP) Section of MCES regulates and monitors more than 900 industrial customers discharging to the sanitary sewer systems. Our goal is to ensure compliance with local and federal regulations and reduce the amount of pollution entering the wastewater collection system. The IWPP Section also responds to sewer-related spills and community sewer problems. These functions protect MCES and the community wastewater collection and treatment facilities, process efficiency, operating personnel, and the environment.

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MCES 2022 customer workshops

The MCES Industrial Waste and Pollution Prevention (IWPP) staff are hosting three customer workshops this year. We host these workshops to share the MCES budget and preliminary rates process, provide pretreatment program news and updates, and hear from you on matters that concern your business.

2022 customer workshops:

- Liquid Waste Hauler Customer Workshop – April 6, 9 to 10:30 a.m. (Teams video conference)
- Industrial Customer Workshop – April 27, 9 to 11 a.m. (Teams video conference)
- Microbrewery Customer Workshop – Fall 2022 (Date and venue to be announced)



All customers holding an MCES permit are invited to join in the workshops. Watch your email inbox for an invitation from METC@public.govdelivery.com to register. We look forward to your participation and hearing from you.

Liquid waste hauler customer workshop was a success

The workshop for liquid waste haulers on April 6 included an overview of the Septage Management Program, load charges, accepted waste types by sites, information to help haulers complete their reports, and announcement of a new low-volume permit for haulers.

A recording of the workshop is available on our [workshop webpage](#) along with a summary of the questions and answers from the event.

MCES 2021 performance report is now available



From wastewater collection and treatment to water resources planning and protection, MCES is continuously evolving to address the needs of our changing communities. This flexibility was particularly urgent as we adapted to meet the challenges of 2021: the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; supply chain issues that tested our operational agility; and increasingly stringent regulatory requirements.

In the face of these challenges, our staff demonstrated an impressive spirit of collaboration – from our solutions-focused inter-agency water quality group to our ongoing involvement in COVID-19 wastewater analysis. Learn more about our activities and accomplishments over the past year in our [2021 Performance Report](#).

Important Dates:

- April 6, 2022 – Liquid Waste Hauler Customer Workshop
- April 15, 2022 – All Liquid Waste Hauler quarterly reports due online
- April 27, 2022 – Industrial Customer Workshop
- April 30, 2022 – All Standard and Special quarterly reports due online

Compliance is required regardless of supply chain shortages

Wastewater pretreatment is a method used by many permittees to comply with MCES discharge limitations. As we all continue to deal with supply chain issues, we encourage our permittees with pretreatment systems to maintain an inventory of replacement parts for critical components of your systems. Reasonable precautions must be taken to minimize accidental discharges including prohibited slugs, spills, and bypasses. We suggest developing a risk management plan to ensure that compliance is maintained should a critical component fail, and a replacement part cannot be quickly or easily obtained.

All permittees are required to notify your [MCES permit engineer](#) prior to making modifications to pretreatment systems or when operational changes significantly affect the volume or characteristics of your discharge. In case of a discharge slug, spill, or bypass, you are required to call the Minnesota Duty Officer at 651-649-5451. Refer to our [Spill Reporting](#) website for more information.

Local limits evaluation concludes no changes

In September 2021, we completed our evaluation of the local limits for discharge to the sanitary sewer and are recommending no changes to the current limits. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has reviewed the evaluation and findings and agrees with our conclusions.



The evaluation, which we are required to complete every five years, did indicate that further investigation is needed to identify copper, mercury, and zinc sources for specific plant collection systems, as well as develop a data-gathering plan for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), sulfate, aluminum, and ammonia in the entire regional collection system.

Changes to the local limits have not been made since the 1996 evaluation, when five of the eight regulated parameter limits were lowered. Our 2011 evaluation indicated the need for a limit on selenium due to the discharge from one industrial user. A selenium limit was put in that industrial user's permit rather than adding a limit for the entire system.

The MCES local limits are found in the [MCES Waste Discharge Rules](#), Section 401, "Local Pretreatment Standards." Companies that are also subject to EPA Categorical Limits are required to meet the most stringent of the two limits for each parameter.

Rags down the drain cause clogs down the pipe

Rags in wastewater cause serious operational problems to the sanitary sewer collection system and wastewater treatment plant equipment. "Rags" is a general term used to describe items such as paper towels, disposable wipes, tissues, napkins, and other textiles. Disposing of this type of material to the sanitary sewer is prohibited by [MCES Waste Discharge Rules](#) Article II, Section 406.



Rags sent down the drain become entangled in lift station pumps and other mechanical equipment. Although there are bar screens in place to catch large debris before it reaches the equipment, material still gets through. Removing this material must be done by hand and takes a significant amount of labor time. When rags get caught in lift station pumps, the pumps need to be taken out of service and cleaned. The rag clogs can cause pump seal and motor failure, which can lead to major sewer backups and costly repairs.

Just because a product is labeled as "flushable" doesn't mean that it should be flushed. Personal wipes and paper towels are made of fibrous material that does not break down in wastewater like toilet paper does. When wipes, towels, or any material other than toilet paper is flushed to the sewer system, it needs to be removed and sent to a landfill, which is where it should have been disposed of in the first place.

Please help us reduce our maintenance costs and keep your wastewater rates low by preventing rags and other prohibited wastes from getting into the sanitary sewer system.

Please refer to our [What Not to Flush](#) webpage for more information and consider displaying this [poster](#) at your business to remind employees to not send rags down the drain.

Regional wastewater service expanded to Loretto

MCES now serves 111 communities



The City of Loretto was connected to MCES's wastewater system on September 2, 2021. This addition to our system is the result of nearly a decade of planning and collaboration with local municipalities.

Before connecting to our system, the City of Loretto owned and operated a wastewater treatment facility that indirectly discharged into Lake Independence. Lake Independence is classified as a "recreational water" since its primary uses are swimming, fishing, and boating. In 2007, the lake was identified as "impaired water" because of excess nutrients, including phosphorus, which can lead to harmful algal blooms. To protect and improve water quality in the lake, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency decided to no longer allow phosphorus to be discharged to the lake from the Loretto wastewater facility and outlined a compliance schedule for Loretto to connect to the regional sanitary sewer system.

MCES and Loretto collaborated and determined that building a regional interceptor to Loretto was going to cost \$50 million. This isn't a reasonable investment for a community that is projected to grow by only 20 homes in the next 20 years. Instead, a plan was developed to use local infrastructure owned by the cities of Medina and Independence for \$4.5 million. This plan required MCES to enter three intergovernmental agreements. While the process was complex, the purpose was clear: to protect the environment and invest public finances wisely. Expanding service to Loretto protects the water quality in Lake Independence and doing so in collaboration with the surrounding municipalities allows us to use the existing infrastructure effectively.

MnTAP's 2021 interns provide big saving solutions for local industries

The 2021 Minnesota Technical Assistance Program's (MnTAP) intern projects in the Twin Cities metropolitan area resulted in solutions that can save local industries 7.6 million gallons of water and 242,482 therms of energy or \$96,620 annually, as well as reduce significant environmental impacts.

General Mills, located in Golden Valley

MnTAP intern Abby Reinert (bioproducts and biosystems engineering, University of Minnesota Twin Cities) helped General Mills, a multinational manufacturer and marketer of branded consumer foods, develop a water balance for its Golden Valley facility and identify opportunities to conserve water.

Abby recommended recycling reverse osmosis (RO) reject water, replacing current nozzles with flow nozzles, integrating aqueous ozone into the sanitation process, and changing the flow rate of the aerators on the hand sinks. These recommendations have the annual potential of reducing water use by 2,587,040 gallons and energy by 282 therms, saving \$12,220.

Great Lakes Coca-Cola, located in Eagan

MnTAP intern Muhammad Fawad Khan (chemical engineering, University of Minnesota Duluth) helped Great Lakes Coca-Cola, a beverage manufacturer, bottler, and distributor, identify ways to reduce overall site water use, optimize facility processes, and reduce various utility costs.

Muhammad recommended reducing the bottle rinser flowrate, bottle rinser shutoff or removal, reducing backwash time, and installing turbidity sensors. These recommendations have the annual potential of reducing water use by 5,060,000 gallons and saving \$18,700.

JIT Powder Coating, located in Farmington

MnTAP intern Calvin Harris (chemical engineering, University of Minnesota Twin Cities) helped JIT Powder Coating, a custom coater and supplier of high-quality powder coats on formed and fabricated metal substrates, drive improvement projects that will allow it to support a potential shift to zirconium treatment, as well as evaluate opportunities to save energy and labor.

Calvin recommended installing a small line immersion heater, implementing large line modifications, installing variable frequency drives on pumps and exhaust fan, and using zirconium pretreatment. These recommendations have the annual potential of reducing energy by 34,400 kWh, 242,200 therms, and saving \$65,700.

For more information about these and MnTAP's other 2021 intern projects, visit [MnTAP Solutions 2021](#).

Special Discharge Program website

We now have a website containing specific information for our Special Discharge Program. This site is an excellent resource for customers holding an MCES Special Discharge Permit, as well as those who would like to apply to dispose of landfill leachate/condensate, contaminated groundwater or surface water, or short-term industrial waste to the MCES Metropolitan Disposal System. You can visit the website at: [Special Discharge Program - Metropolitan Council \(metro council.org\)](#).

MCES COVID-19 update

With COVID-19 transmission rates lowering in the Twin Cities area, MCES is transitioning teleworking staff back to the office and our staff will resume unannounced monitoring projects at permitted industries beginning April 18, 2022. All Metropolitan Council facilities will reopen to the public on April 25, 2022.

We continue to ask staff to stay home if feeling ill or have been exposed to COVID-19, but weekly covid testing for unvaccinated staff is no longer required and masking on-site is now optional. However, if your facility continues to have a masking requirement, our monitoring staff will adhere to it.

Should transmission rates increase in the future, we will follow state public health guidelines in implementing COVID-19 procedures and will relate any pertinent procedures to our customers.

Peter Sandberg retires



Peter Sandberg retired April 1 after being with MCES for more than 21 years. Many of you know Peter as the compliance officer for the industrial waste pretreatment program and administrator of the sewer cleaning permits. He held these positions since August 2018. Prior to this, he was manager of the Metro Plant's Solids Management Business Unit and responsible for ensuring proper solids processing, handling, and incineration. Before then, he audited MCES's internal compliance program.

"Peter had a common-sense approach to handling compliance issues that will be greatly missed, along with his ability to clearly communicate expectations to permittees while supporting their efforts to achieve compliance," said Industrial Waste manager Tina Nelson.

Looking back on his career, Peter said, "I'm most proud of being involved in creating steam and energy from solids incineration to provide power to the Metro Plant."

Daniel Russow, principal engineer, is the acting compliance officer until one is named. You can contact Daniel at daniel.russow@metc.state.mn.us.

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2022 Industrial User rates and fees

The 2022 Industrial User rates and fees are as follows.

Permit Fees (paid annually):

- \$625 to \$10,975 depending on permit status for Industrial, Special, and Liquid Waste Hauler permits
- \$425 for Sewer Cleaning Waste Hauler General permits
- \$475 for all other General permits

Strength Charge rates for wastewater discharged on site:

- \$0.2740 per excess pound of total suspended solids (TSS)
- \$0.1370 per excess pound of chemical oxygen demand (COD)

Full-cost recovery rates for treatment of industrial wastewater hauled to MCES disposal sites:

- \$0.4130 per excess pound of TSS
- \$0.2065 per excess pound of COD

Production-based strength charge for microbrewery and brewpub facilities on General Permit:

- \$0.859 per beer barrel

Liquid Waste Hauler Load Charges:

- \$11.40 per 1,000 gallons for Domestic Holding Tank wastes
- \$60.24 per 1,000 gallons for Domestic Septage and Commercial wastes
- \$77.46 per 1,000 gallons for Portable Toilet wastes
- \$75.24 per 1,000 gallons for Out-of-Service Area Domestic wastes

Service fee for Out-of-Service Area loads:

- \$15.00 per 1,000 gallons



Industrial Capacity Charge (ICC):

- \$2.21 per 1,000 gallons

Sewer Availability Charge (SAC):

- \$2,485 per SAC unit (1 SAC unit = 274 gallons per day). SAC is paid to the local community for use of the Metropolitan Disposal System (MDS) capacity.

The Temporary Capacity Charge (TCC):

- \$1.25 per 1,000 gallons (SAC paid directly to MCES for temporary use of the MDS capacity)

For more information about the MCES Industrial User rates and fees, visit [MCES Industrial User Rates and Fees](#) website.

Let's stay connected!

To make sure you receive important information regarding your MCES permit, add the following emails to your address book:

MCESIndustrialOnlineReporting@metc.state.mn.us and

METC@public.govdelivery.com. (GovDelivery is a news delivery system. This is not an active email account.)

If you need to update your contact information, please contact the [MCES staff](#) assigned to your permit or email us at iwpp@metc.state.mn.us.

