

OPEN CHANNEL NEWS

News bulletin from Metropolitan Council Environmental Services



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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, state, 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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Recent sewer system emergencies call for interagency response

Two sewer system incidents prompted evacuations at the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus and in surrounding neighborhoods this summer. They provided stark reminders of why MCES regulates and monitors industrial discharges to the sewer system and ensures compliance with local, state, and federal regulations.

Combustible, flammable, and explosive substances – such as fuels, oils, solvents, and tars – and substances that can react to create a fire or explosion hazard are strictly prohibited from being disposed of down the drain.

On June 30, a fire and explosion occurred in the sewer system on campus. On August 2, a large oily slug was observed in the sewers near the university along with hazardous atmospheric readings of lower explosive limit (LEL) concentrations.

These two incidents required a large-scale, coordinated interagency response to:

- Address emergency situations to protect public health and safety
- Assess ongoing public safety and the integrity of the affected sewer infrastructure
- Investigate the potential sources of the prohibited substances in the sewer and identify who may be responsible for releasing them.

Interagency Team

- MCES
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Department of Public Safety - fire marshal
- University of Minnesota - police, facilities engineering, and public works staff
- City of Minneapolis - fire department, public works, emergency management, and storm and sewer staff
- City of St Paul - fire department, public works, and emergency management staff



A sample collected from the sanitary sewer on August 2 with at least one inch of floating oily material.

Continued with Investigating the source....

Important Dates:

- Oct 15, 2022 – All Liquid Waste Hauler quarterly reports due [online](#).
- Oct 31, 2022 – All Standard and Special quarterly reports due [online](#).

Investigating the source

MCES and the MPCA have worked together to investigate potential sources of the hazardous materials in the sanitary sewer system near the University of Minnesota. MPCA checked all permitted storage tanks and MCES is checking industries in the vicinity of the incidents and upstream. We also are sampling air and wastewater and have installed real-time LEL monitors.

We recognize that most industrial users of the public sanitary sewers strive to meet compliance regulations. Your actions protect the public, regional and municipal collection and treatment facilities, process efficiency, operating personnel, and the environment. Thank you for being our partner in ensuring clean water for future generations.

Who to call?

- Any person or business responsible for a spill to the storm or sanitary sewer system must call the Minnesota Duty Officer at 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798.
- Anyone that has information about inappropriate disposal of hazardous material into the sewer system, can contact MCES at 651-602-4511 or the Minnesota Duty Officer at 651-649-5451.
- Anyone who smells gas or chemical odors should call 911.

Fats, oils, grease, and rags task force

Be part of the solution

Fats, oils, grease (FOG) and rags (paper towels, disposable wipes, tissues, napkins, and other textiles) that are washed or flushed down the drain disrupt the flow of wastewater through the sanitary sewer system. This disruption leads to costly maintenance and equipment repairs for municipalities and MCES. These costs are passed on to users of the system – you. FOG and rags in the sewer can also lead to backups that can interrupt sewer use and damage property. A large part of the problem is that there are thousands of users of the system, many of whom are not aware of the impacts that FOG and rags can have in the sewer system.



FOG buildup disrupting flow in a local sewer pipe

MCES is forming a task force with community and industry representation to find solutions and educate the public on the FOG and rag problem. We are interested in your input and participation.

The goal of the task force is to:

- Identify ways MCES can support communities in addressing FOG and rag clogs in local sanitary sewers.
- Determine if our community partners would support a regional strategy to address FOG and rags from residents, businesses, and institutions.
- Solicit input so MCES can develop a toolkit for communities and businesses to address FOG and rags.

We encourage all interested parties to be part of the solution and join the task force to help reduce the discharge of FOG and rags that are clogging our system.

To learn more about the task force and how you can help, please contact Tim Rothstein at 651-602-4724 or tim.rothstein@metc.state.mn.us.

Consumers can help reduce PFAS in the environment

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly known as PFAS or “forever chemicals”, are a large group of man-made chemicals that do not break down in the environment. Exposure to excess levels of certain PFAS are known to have negative health effects such as impaired neurodevelopment, reduced immune system functioning, and increased risk of cancer.

PFAS are commonly used by industries and in consumer products. As a result, these substances are present in solid waste facilities and wastewater treatment plants. Due to the difficulty of treatment of these substances, the Industrial Waste Pollution Prevention section is working towards expanding source identification and reduction efforts and educating our permittees and the public on PFAS.



Every day consumers can also take action to reduce the amount of PFAS released into the environment. Common products that often contain these substances are:



- microwavable popcorn bags, fast-food packaging, pizza boxes, and candy wrappers



- nonstick cookware, varnishes, and sealants



- carpeting and clothing that is waterproof and water- or stain-resistant



- some shampoos, dental floss, and cosmetics

When buying products avoid those containing “PTFE” or other “fluoro” ingredients. Products that are “PFOA Free” are free of only one type of PFAS. Opting for products that are instead “PFAS Free” ensures it is free of all fluorinated chemicals. Additionally, avoiding carpet or upholstery that have known water- or stain-resistant treatment is best as these treatments often include PFAS. The Green Science Policy Institute has created a [list](#) of PFAS-Free products to help consumers reduce their overall exposure.

Additional PFAS information and resources from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can be found [here](#).

Updating the Sampling Results SMR templates

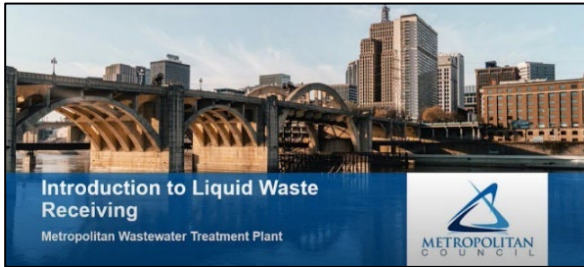
We are revising the Excel templates that are used to upload your sampling results when completing the Sampling Results SMR in the Industrial Online Reporting System (IORS).

When the revisions are complete, the newest version of the templates will be uploaded into the IORS and the Online Reporting webpage. At this point, the old Excel templates will become obsolete and will no longer work when uploading data into the IORS.

All affected permittees will be notified by email when the new templates are available. If you have any questions, please contact the IORS Helpline at 651-602-4789 or MCESIndustrialOnlineReporting@metc.state.mn.us.

[Online Reporting - Metropolitan Council \(metroreporting.metrocouncil.org\)](http://metroreporting.metrocouncil.org)

Watch how MCES receives liquid waste from haulers on YouTube



We are excited to release our new Introduction to Liquid Waste Receiving video now available on YouTube. This seven-minute video provides a brief overview of MCES's septage management program and a more detailed view of how liquid waste haulers use the facility.

This video is a great tool for training in new drivers, as well as learning how we receive and manage hauled liquid waste from residential, commercial, and industrial sources in the Metro and surrounding area.

[Introduction to Liquid Waste Receiving at Metro Plant - YouTube](#)

Is your business changing ownership?

Prior approval is needed to transfer your MCES permit

MCES Industrial Discharge Permits are issued to specific industrial users at specific facilities. In the event of a change in facility ownership, the prior owner is required to notify MCES 30 days before the ownership transfer and MCES must grant written approval for a permit transfer to take place. Until MCES approval is granted, the prior owner is responsible for all permit requirements including submittal of reports, compliance with specific conditions, and payment of all applicable fees and charges up to the date of transfer.

The new owner must submit a permit transfer form to MCES agreeing to be bound by the terms and conditions of the existing permit or submit a new permit application. If the new owner starts operating prior to MCES approval of permit transfer, they are considered to be operating without a permit and may be subject to a notice of violation. Additionally, depending on the nature of the company sale, the Sewer Availability Charge (SAC) baseline assigned to the permit may not transfer to the new owner, resulting in a SAC liability.

MCES may approve or deny a permit transfer depending on the capability of the new owner to comply with the permit.

A Permit Transfer form, which must be completed for MCES to consider the transfer, is available online at [Industrial Waste Forms - Metropolitan Council \(metroreporting.metrocouncil.org\)](#)

If you have questions regarding your MCES permit requirements, call the [MCES engineer](#) assigned to your permit.



Robert Golden retired August 5

Bob Golden, IWPP assistant manager of field monitoring and response actions, retired August 5 after being with MCES for 38 years. During his career, Bob has administered permits to industries and liquid waste haulers, was involved in continuous improvements to our septage management program including planning of the current liquid waste receiving facilities and oversaw monitoring of industries and response to wastewater treatment and sanitary sewer system issues.

Tina Nelson, IWPP manager says, "I appreciate Bob's contributions to the field monitoring side of our pretreatment program. He always made sure we met our monitoring requirements and developed procedures to chase down the source of issues in our collection and treatment systems. Bob was a great mentor and leader to our field staff."

Bob felt good about playing an important role in MCES's mission to partner, plan, and provide services to protect our region's water and ensure clean water for future generations. In retirement, Bob will be enjoying canoeing and fishing with his grandchildren in waters that he spent his career protecting.

Tim Rothstein, principal engineer, is acting assistant manager until the position is filled.

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MCES 2023 adopted rates and fees

The 2023 preliminary industrial user rates which we shared with you in June, were adopted by the Metropolitan Council's Environment Committee in July. For questions about these rates, please contact Nanette Ewald, nanette.ewald@metc.state.mn.us or 651-602-4767.

[2023 Adopted Industrial User Rates and Fees \(PDF\)](#)

[Environment Committee, Business Item \(metro council.org\)](#)

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 MDS capacity use)

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.

