



# Southwest Delaware County Municipal Authority

## NEWS FROM SWDCMA

April 2017

### VANDALISM

In early to mid-March, the Authority experienced two incidents of vandalism on its collection system. Along the Mildred Lane easement, a manhole lid was removed and large tree limbs and debris were dropped into the 25' deep manhole. This resulted in a sewer line blockage at the bottom of the manhole and ultimately a sanitary sewer overflow. Our contractor, Aqua Wastewater, had their crew work for four hours to remove the debris and clean the line to be assured all of the debris was removed. In addition, we received a fine from PA DEP for the sanitary sewer overflow. Five days later, the same manhole was again found overflowing at 4:00 p.m. This incident was caused by large rocks that were deliberately lodged into the sewer line at the bottom of the 25' manhole again resulting in another sewer line blockage and another sanitary sewer overflow. Aqua Wastewater had a six man crew work on extracting the rocks and repairing the vandalism until nearly 2:00 a.m.

The cost for both of these incidents was over \$11,000.00. And, although the Authority did receive an insurance reimbursement for a portion of this cost, it goes without saying that the ratepayers should not have to bear the cost of vandalism as part of their rates.

The sanitary sewer collection system is a dangerous place and is not intended for entry without proper training and certification. Aston Police Department has been notified of these incidents and is on alert for any suspicious activity involving the collection system.

### DISPOSABLE WIPES

A reoccurring situation that Aqua Wastewater is finding when called to clear a sewer blockage is the accumulation of personal wipes that have been flushed into the sanitary sewer system. Baby wipes, adult wipes, feminine hygiene products and paper towels are all items that should never be flushed into the sanitary sewer. These products do not biodegrade at an acceptable rate. The accumulation of these products in both the homeowner's lateral and the sewer mains most often results in a blockage, an overflow and possibly a backup of sewage in your home.

### COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS

One of the highest priority issues of the Authority has been to collect delinquent accounts. In late 2010, the Authority was facing delinquent accounts totaling over \$4 million. Presently, the Authority's delinquent accounts receivable is about \$700,000. The collection of delinquent accounts is one of the main reasons that rate increases have been held to minimal amounts.

The Authority's current collection procedure includes the filing of a lien when an account reaches a past due balance of \$600.00. In addition, one of our strongest resources in collecting delinquent accounts is the use of water service disconnection. The Authority works closely with both CWA and Aqua America to interrupt the water service of accounts that have chosen not to respond to our requests for payment or to enter into a payment arrangement to satisfy their past due account. Most recently, we had CWA implement their new "plug and lock" system on those accounts which have restored their water service illegally.

Moving forward, the Authority will be taking a stronger legal action against accounts with severely delinquent balances. Starting in April 2017, the Authority has instructed our Solicitor to begin the process of filing lawsuits against these delinquent accounts. These lawsuits will demand payment of legal costs, interest, penalties and attorney's fees in addition to the outstanding delinquent balance.

Failure of the property owners to respond with payment, or to enter a payment arrangement, will result in a judgment against the property and the foreclosure of the property from the delinquent owner.

### **LATERAL MAINTENANCE**

We continue to discuss the importance of lateral maintenance and the homeowner's responsibility. A sewer lateral is the pipe that runs perpendicular from the sewer main into the resident's home. This pipe carries the wastewater from the home into the sanitary sewer which is then taken to DELCORA for treatment. Homeowner laterals are not part of the Authority's collection system.

Lateral maintenance is the homeowner's responsibility. Lateral maintenance is defined as the clearing of the inside of the lateral pipe all the way to the sewer main, including root growth and grease build-up. Neither SWDCMA, nor Aqua Resources, Inc., will provide the service of clearing a homeowner's sluggish or blocked lateral.

If you experience a sewer back up in your home, please call our office at (610) 494-1335 to place a trouble call. If the call is made during working hours (Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.), SWDCMA office staff will handle your call. If the call is made after working hours, please follow the prompt for Trouble Calls. This process will route your call to an Operator who will determine whether a technician will be dispatched to your home or if it will be necessary for you to contact a plumber.

### **REDUCTION OF INFLOW & INFILTRATION (I & I)**

Our debt service and treatment cost with Delcora is based upon our proportionate flows being sent to Delcora. This billing formula is the reason why the Authority has been working so diligently to find and remove sources of inflow and infiltration into our collection system. Inflow is storm water that enters into sanitary sewer systems at points of direct connection to the systems. Infiltration is groundwater that enters sanitary sewer systems through cracks and/or leaks in the sanitary sewer pipes, including sewer laterals. Since your treatment rates are based in part on the total gallons treated by Delcora, it is crucial that we continue to work to remove I & I from our collection system by doing the following:

1 – Disconnect Sump Pumps and Rain Gutter Downspouts from Sanitary Sewer: the discharge from sump pumps and downspouts should not enter the sanitary sewer system as these connections are illegal, per the Aston Township Plumbing Code. If your sump pump or downspouts currently discharge into the sanitary sewer system, you should locate and remove these connections so that they are re-routed to the nearest storm water drain.

2 – Repair Damaged/Buried Sewer Vents/Cleanouts: damaged or buried sewer vents/cleanouts are sources of rainwater entering the sanitary sewer and can also be hazardous to pedestrians and pets. If your sewer vent/cleanout is damaged or buried, you should locate and replace with the proper above-grade style vent cap, available at your local hardware store.

3 – Lateral Maintenance: your sewer lateral is the pipe that runs from your home to the sewer main in the street. The maintenance of the lateral is the responsibility of the homeowner, from the home to the sewer main. Throughout time, laterals can develop cracks and loose pipe joints which allow rainwater into the sewer system. In addition, tree roots can enter through these cracks and grow inside the lateral resulting in sluggish drainage performance, blockages and backups.

### **PAYMENT OPTIONS**

Payments can be made via mail, in person at the Authority Administration Building or on our website ([www.swdelcoma.org](http://www.swdelcoma.org)). Accepted methods of payment are cash, check, money order and debit/ credit cards. A fee of 2.65% of the amount being paid (\$3.00 minimum) is charged by the company who processes the debit/credit card transactions.

For those customers who choose to pay in person, please be sure to bring your entire invoice with you so that it can be stamped "Paid". In addition, a handwritten receipt is issued for all cash payments. Payments are received Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. There is no drop box available. Please note: exact change is required.

For those customers who choose to pay using their online banking service, please verify that you have entered your SWDCMA account number correctly to avoid misapplication of your payment. Please note: online banking checks can take up to 10 days to be received in our office. Please be sure to schedule your payment to allow for timely arrival.