

Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) Overview and Reporting Requirements

Owners of waste water treatment plants operating under a Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination (MPDES) permit are required to report any serious incident of noncompliance affecting the environment as soon as possible, but not later than 24 hours from the time the permittee first becomes aware of the circumstances.

Unintentional discharges of raw sewage from sanitary sewers, which do not occur at the designated waste water treatment plant outfall, can seriously endanger health or the environment. These types of discharges are known as sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). The untreated sewage from these overflows can contaminate our waters, causing serious water quality problems. It can also back-up into basements, causing property damage and threaten public health. Raw sewage contains disease-causing pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, worms, and protozoa. Diseases resulting from enteric pathogens range from stomach flu and upper respiratory infections to potentially life-threatening illnesses such as cholera, dysentery, Hepatitis B, and cryptosporidiosis. Children, the elderly, and people with suppressed immune systems face added risk of contracting serious illnesses.

SSOs have a variety of causes, including but not limited to blockages, line breaks, sewer defects that allow storm water and ground water to overload the system, lapses in sewer system operation and maintenance, power failures, inadequate sewer design and vandalism.

As a serious threat to human health and the environment, SSOs must be reported as required by the Monitoring, Recording and Reporting requirements of your MPDES permit and the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 17.30.1342(12)(f). In order to comply with noncompliance reporting requirements, information must be provided orally to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) within 24 hours from the time you become aware of the circumstances. A written submission must also be provided within five days of the time you become aware of the SSO. All SSOs, no matter the circumstances or cause, must be reported to DEQ, even if you do not believe a violation has occurred. DEQ will make the determination if the SSO will result in the facility being in violation of the Water Quality Act or your permit.

The 24-hour report of noncompliance must be made to DEQ – Water Protection Bureau at (406) 444-3080 or to the Office of Disaster and Emergency services at (406) 841-3911. The 24-hour report should include as much preliminary information you may have gathered including, but not limited to, the date and time the SSO started and when the SSO ceased or an anticipated time the discharge is expected to stop. The oral report should also include a location and cause of the SSO, if known. And finally, the 24-hour

oral report also needs to include your permit number, facility name, and contact information.

The five day written submission for an SSO must include the following information:

- Facility contact information
 - permit number
 - facility name
 - mailing address, city, state, and zip Code
 - name and title of the person reporting the non-compliance
 - contact information including phone email and phone number
- SSO information
 - date of SSO
 - date the facility became aware of the SSO
 - start time and end time of the SSO and the duration of the SSO in hours
 - If the SSO has not been corrected you must provide the anticipated timeframe in which it is expected to continue.
 - the SSO volume in gallons and the method for determining the volume
 - the date, time you orally reported the SSO and the DEQ employee you contacted.
- SSO location information
 - street address of SSO
 - latitude and longitude of SSO (if available)
 - name of receiving water
 - manhole number (if applicable)
- SSO Description
 - the cause of the SSO
 - the impact of the SSO (i.e. basement backup, private/public property, receiving water reached).
 - system component (manhole, house lateral, pipe failure, storm drain, pump station failure)
- SSO Prevention and Mitigation
 - steps taken to reduce, prevent, and mitigate future SSOs at the location (i.e. removed blockage, repaired pipe, repaired pump station)
 - a detailed narrative description of the above stated steps taken to reduce, prevent, and mitigate future SSOs.

The 5-day report must be signed by a principle executive officer, a ranking elected official, or a duly authorized representative of that person as required by ARM 17.30.1323. The report must also include the following certification statement:

“I certify under penalty of law that this document and all attachments were prepared under my direction or supervision in accordance with a system designed to assure that qualified personnel properly gather and evaluate the information submitted. Based on my inquiry of the persons who manage the system, or those persons directly responsible for gathering the information, the information submitted is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true, accurate, and complete. I am aware that there are significant penalties for submitting false information; including the possibility of a fine and imprisonment for knowing violations.”

DEQ has developed Form SSO which can be used to fulfill the 5-day reporting requirements information. If the form is used, it must be completely filled out, and received by DEQ with 5 days of the 24-hour oral report.

The five day report must be sent to the following address:

Department of Environmental Quality
Water Protection Bureau
PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901