![DEQ Montana Department of Environmental Quality logo]

# EXAMPLE OF A STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR

# SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS (SSO)

Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO) happen when there is a backup, or flooding, in the sanitary sewer collection system or treatment system. The discharge may be from a municipal-owned line, or a lateral line (from a building into a municipally owned line). The operator is responsible for the reporting and cleanup if an SSO occurs due to a problem in the municipal-owned line. If it occurs in the lateral line of a home or business, it is the responsibility of the owner to perform the cleanup.

Any backup is considered an SSO. A backup is defined as raw or partially treated sewage water that leaves the treatment system and overflows into a building or onto the ground. A backup is an unauthorized discharge, a discharge from a location other than the permitted discharge location and is a violation of the Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit and the Clean Water Act (if not reported). If the operator thinks they have an SSO, it is required to be reported in their permits, it is only a violation if the SSO is NOT reported . A backup is required to be reported to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the local county sanitarian to meet any requirements the county sanitarian may have. Unauthorized discharges are required to be cleaned up.

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN A SUSPECTED SSO HAS OCCURRED:

1. Determine if there is an actual discharge from the sanitary sewer collection system.
    a. Is it a basement backup?
    b. Is there a discharge to the ground out of a manhole or lift station?
2. Report the SSO to DEQ using the online form.
    a. Information required to be reported:
        i. Date, time, and location of the SSO.
        ii. The volume of the discharge, etc.
3. Determine what has caused the backup.
    a. Is there an obstruction in the municipal line or the lateral line?
        i. Check the municipal line by looking in the manholes above and below the suspected location. If the wastewater is flowing above and below, then the obstruction is probably in the lateral.
        ii. If the discharge is suspected in the lateral, a plumber will have to be called by the owner.

4. Determine who is responsible for cleaning up the discharge and removal of the obstruction.
    a. If the discharge is caused by an obstruction in a municipal line, the municipality is responsible for the cleanup.
        i. If the discharge has caused a backup in a residential or commercial building, the municipality usually pays to have the area cleaned.
            1. If it is a small volume of water, the owner may decide to do it themselves. Bleach works to clean and disinfect most surfaces.
            2. If a large volume was discharged, a professional cleaning service may be used. The operator should have the telephone numbers available for distribution to the public as needed.
        ii. If the discharge is out of a manhole or a lift station, the municipality is required to remove the sewage that has accumulated on the surface, and properly dispose of the material.
    b. If the discharge is in a lateral, the homeowner is responsible for the cleanup.
5. The cleanup of the overflow may include the following:
    a. Vacuum the pooled water and return it to the sanitary sewer.
        i. Clean hard surfaces with bleach and remove  the rinse water to the sanitary sewer.
        ii. Rope off the area and cover it with lime to kill the bacteria that can cause disease. Then remove the lime.
    b. If it is a small spill, use a shop vac to remove the water and debris—return to the sewer.
    c. Cover the spill area with an absorbent material and physically dispose of the absorbent from the area to a landfill.
    d. If the discharge has dried:
        i. Physically removing the debris left on the surface by scraping it up and hauling to a landfill.
        ii. Rope off the area and cover it with lime to kill the bacteria that can cause disease.
6. Complete any testing required by the County Health Department or the State.
7. Document the SSO for your records. The state inspector may ask for the details about the SSO.