

**CITY OF WASHBURN**  
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## **Notice to Washburn Sewer Utility Customers**

Since December of 2009, the City of Washburn Sewer Utility has been exceeding allowable limits set by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on several aspects of its treated sewerage sludge. These violations have caused the DNR to impose a moratorium on any expansion of the sewer system until the problem is corrected, and an adequate number of acceptable test results have been received. This moratorium has the potential to increase costs for you, the current customers.

The City of Washburn treatment plant relies on micro-organisms as part of the treatment process. Those micro-organisms have been dying, which results in sewerage which is not fully treated. Currently, there is no risk to human or environmental health as the sludge is contained in a holding area.

City staff have been working to determine the cause since the problem was first discovered. Numerous consultants and engineers, along with the Department of Natural Resources, were called in to inspect the plant, and all have determined that no physical or mechanical problem exists with the sewer treatment plant. The only other explanation is the unauthorized and illegal discharge of prohibited substances into the sanitary sewer system. Other evidence also suggests that illegal dumping is in fact occurring.

It is illegal to dump any gasoline, benzene, Naptha, fuel oil, or any other petroleum-based products, along with other toxic or poisonous substances that would otherwise be of hazard to human health, into the sanitary sewer system.

Recent test results show that the City now appears to be regenerating an adequate number of micro-organisms in the treatment process. It is our sincere hope that this problem was caused by someone who was unaware of the implications of his or her actions, and that it will not occur again. This has already caused the Sewer Utility lost staff time and increased expenses which are paid by all of you, the customers. Given the current fiscal situation of the Utility, the taxpayers of the City will absorb the costs that exceed the revenue of the Utility.

Please know, however, that if the situation persists or returns, the City will hire additional consultants, at considerable expense, to trace the contaminants to the source. Once found, the City will seek to prosecute responsible parties to the fullest extent of the law.

Sincerely,

Scott J. Kluver  
City Administrator

Kenneth R. Johnson  
Chief of Police