



Focus on Protecting Pasco's Wastewater Treatment Plant



Overview

Over the past few years, the city of Pasco's wastewater treatment plant has experienced problems, which are likely caused by unauthorized discharges into the sewage collection system. These discharges, of an agricultural chemical, pesticide or other trucked products, have killed much of the biological growth at the treatment plant, interrupting the treatment of the waste water. This caused the city to violate its wastewater discharge permit limits. As a result, The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) issued a monetary penalty. Ecology and the city of Pasco invited those who are potential causes of the upsets to a meeting in February 2001 to discuss the regulations that apply to these types of discharges. The list of people invited included: vehicle washers, agricultural fertilizer and pesticide chemical suppliers, truckers, and warehousing operators.

Regulations

The following local, state, and federal regulations prohibit the discharge of certain waste materials into the public sewer system.

The Pasco Municipal Code (PMC) 13.52.280 has specific prohibitions of certain waste materials into the public sewer system such as:

- Waste materials with a pH lower than 5.5 (acidic) or higher than 9.0 (caustic).
- Materials with a corrosive property capable of causing damage or hazard to structures, equipment or personnel of the sewage works.
- Any waters or waste containing a toxic or poisonous substance in sufficient quantity to injure or interfere with any sewage treatment process (by killing or severely reducing the microbiological populations), constitute a hazard to humans or animals, or create any hazard in the receiving waters of the sewage treatment plant.

The state of Washington and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have similar regulations (Washington Administrative Code Chapter 173-216 and Code of Federal Regulations 40 part 403, respectively), which:

- Prohibit the discharge of waste materials into a municipal sewer system that will interfere with the operation of the sewage treatment plant, be incompatible with the plant, or pass through the plant without proper treatment.
- Prohibit the introduction of trucked or hauled waste, except at discharge points designated by the municipality.

The Washington state departments of Agriculture (WSDA) and Ecology have regulations for the proper transporting, handling, storage and disposal of certain agricultural products and wastes such as pesticides (Washington Administrative Code 16-228) and fertilizers (Washington Administrative Code 173-303).

Consequences for violations

Local, state, or federal authorities may take enforcement action against any person, business, or public entity that violates these laws or regulations. Enforcement actions may be in the form of either civil or criminal prosecution. If a state regulation is violated, Ecology may impose civil penalties up to \$10,000 per violation and/or criminal penalties of \$10,000 *and* up to one year in jail. Penalties may be substantially higher for violating federal regulations.

Contacts for more information

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