

Be Alert /Be Aware

By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Technician

Regular routine inspections of your collection system can be very enlightening. I would recommend both visual, opening manholes and inspecting the flow and, at times, composite or grab sampling. All inspections should be well documented.

I know that it's hard to believe, but it is true that people will flush about everything even here in Nebraska. Some of these improper discharges can be harmful to your treatment process (compliance), to public health and to you personally. "As an operator you are responsible to protect your collection system as you see fit." That was once relayed to me by an E.P.A. attorney.

Be suspicious. Periodic influent analysis may help answer treatment process issues. As a "been there and done that" operator and now in this position I have been made aware of increasing harmful discharges into the public sanitary sewer collection systems. Many of us have seen used oil in the waste stream. I've witnessed the evidence of large volumes of paint suspected to be from commercial painting operations. Extremely high BOD discharges have been sampled. Extreme discharge pH ranges suspected to have come from manufacturers have also been recorded.

These types of toxic discharges can and do kill treatment plant processes resulting in long recovery times pretty much indiscriminate to treatment types. Even small rural community lagoons are not exempt. When well documented evidence is collected, your best support may come through Village/City ordinances, your state regulatory agency and occasionally law enforcement.

One of my cohorts in a neighboring state said that the frequency of illegal meth lab discharges into the state's collection systems had increased so much that he had developed a recipe for bringing their plants back to life. He warned that it could even contaminate your multimillion dollar plant.

One alert operator relayed to me that the turtles in his small rural community non-discharging lagoons had suddenly all died. He had his suspicions and

reported it to law enforcement. Reportedly after a police raid at a location in his community a meth lab was exposed and shut down.

Yes, even in Nebraska!

You might be interested in an educational brochure/handout on “Protect Your Sewer, Protect Your Environment.” They are \$0.20 a piece if NeRWA prints them and mails them to you, \$0.15 a piece if you pick them up at the NeRWA office or they are free if you go to nerwa.org and click on “news and downloads page” and print the handout yourself.