

Unauthorized release of wastewater: collection system responsibilities

If you are a local unit of government or private entity that owns, operates, and maintains a sanitary sewer collection system that discharges its wastewater to a different city's collection system (interceptor) for treatment, you may encounter a release of untreated or partially treated wastewater into the environment. This type of discharge is known as an unauthorized release of wastewater. Any amount of wastewater that is discharged is an unauthorized discharge of wastewater and is prohibited. The MPCA is providing the following information to help operators of sanitary sewer collection systems respond to an unauthorized release from their collection system.

1. Upon knowledge of a sanitary sewer release from the collection system, the owner or operator is required by [Minn. Stat. § 115.061](#), Duty to Notify, to immediately notify the Minnesota Duty Officer at 800-422-0789, or 651-649-5451 in the Metro Area.

When notifying the Minnesota Duty Officer, please inform them that the event is a “wastewater” release. The term “wastewater” will make sure the right MPCA staff are aware of the release to help as needed.

Owners and operators of collection systems should collect the following information to report the incident immediately to the Minnesota Duty Officer:

- The release location (ex. manhole, force main break, etc.).
- The time the release started.
- If the release has ended.
- The name of the receiving water body.
- The volume of the release (approximate, in gallons).
- The volume of the release that entered the receiving water body.
- The actions taken by staff to respond, recover, and mitigate the release.
- The volume of the release that was recovered and how that material was managed (ex. 1000 gallons hauled to wastewater treatment facility).
- The cause of the release (ex. weather event, equipment failure, etc.).

Owners should keep a record of the Duty Officer Report number. At the time of the initial call, staff may not have all the above information and a second call may be necessary to supplement the Minnesota Duty Officer Report.

2. Immediately after notifying the Minnesota Duty Officer of the release, provide notice to potentially impacted public areas, and to any downstream drinking water facilities that may be impacted by the discharge. This [link](#) provides guidance on the actions that should be taken in the event of a release.
3. The release should be sampled to determine any effects to waters of the state. The [Release Sampling Report](#) form was developed by the MPCA to assist in the collection of information during a release event. The release form collects basic information, provides a list of common parameters sampled for in wastewater and includes room for additional sampling of pollutants of concern based on knowledge of the wastewater collected. Each sampling event must be reported on a separate form. This form should be completed and submitted upon receiving results from the sampling event, but no later than 30 days after the release.

If you are not a permitted facility, please email the [water quality submittal form](#) with your city name included and the release report form to: MPCA, Attn: WQ Submittals Center, wq.submittal.mPCA@state.mn.us.

It is very important that the form be filled out completely and accurately. Specifically:

- Make sure the Minnesota Duty Officer Report Number box is completed. The Minnesota Duty Officer assigns this number at the time of the initial call.
 - Make sure each sample value has the date and time of sample recorded next to it. Provide a short explanation for any required information that is not provided.
 - Report values in the correct column.
4. Both the collection system owners and the MPCA have a responsibility to prevent and reduce sanitary sewer overflows. Collection system owners can achieve this by developing and implementing an asset management program and/or capital improvement plan that promotes routine collection system operation and maintenance activities. Additionally, the MPCA recommends that owners develop a sanitary sewer overflow response plan to ensure staff are prepared for such an event and minimize the impact on the public and the environment. This [link](#) provides information that can help assess your community's sanitary sewer collection system.

MPCA [wastewater staff](#) can help with response to releases and to help with completing correct forms.