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City Manager's Office  
*Memorandum*

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Hans F. Larsen

**SUBJECT:** SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS    **DATE:** April 4, 2012

Approved

Date

4/4/12

**INFORMATION**

The purpose of this memorandum is to increase community awareness about sanitary sewer overflows and other sanitary sewer problems, including how to report sewer issues, where overflows are occurring and their most frequent cause. It is requested that Council and their staff share this information with the public whenever appropriate.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) maintains 2,270 miles of sanitary sewer pipes located within the City's street system. A sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) is one of the most serious matters handled by DOT. Responding to SSOs and other reported sanitary sewer problems is a top priority and DOT has established a 30-minute response standard at all times (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

**Reporting a Sanitary Sewer Overflow or other Sanitary Sewer Problem**

In order for DOT to provide a quick response that could prevent or reduce the negative impacts of an SSO, it is critical that the public contact the City immediately when they might be experiencing or observing an SSO or other sanitary sewer problem. The easiest and most effective way for the public to report such an incident is to call one of the following phone numbers:

When	Who	Phone
Weekdays, 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.	DOT Dispatch	(408) 794-1900
Evenings, Nights, and Weekends	City Communications	(408) 277-8956

**The reporting party should provide a location and description of the problem (with an address whenever possible), his/her name, and a phone number for any needed follow-up information.**

Other means for providing information to the public about reporting SSOs and sewer problems include the following:

- City Website - Information about SSOs with a link that explains how to report a sewer problem to the City now appears front and center on the City's home page as one of the

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rotating messages. Further improvements are being planned for the City’s website that will make finding information about the City’s Sanitary Sewer Maintenance program more intuitive and easier.

- “San Jose Clean” Smartphone App – The smartphone application called San Jose Clean allows the public to report graffiti and litter to the City. Information about reporting SSOs is available on the application under the Contact the City section. Droid-type and iPhone users can download the free application from their respective application market or store sites by searching for the keyword “San Jose Clean”.

**Sanitary Sewer Overflow Locations and Causes**

DOT responds to approximately 5,000 reported sanitary sewer problems throughout the City each year. In most cases, the reported problems are relatively minor and involve a temporary interruption of sewer service to a home or business. In a small percentage of cases, an SSO occurs that may result in a discharge of wastewater into a home, business, front yard, sidewalk, street, and/or waterway. In 2011, 194 SSOs occurred throughout the City. Below is a breakdown of these SSOs by City Council District:

Council District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Number of SSOs	28	14	18	20	22	30	9	12	22	19	194

The majority of SSOs are caused by the accumulation of fats, oils, and grease (FOG) and other debris, such as wet wipes, diapers, rags, and hygiene products, in the sewer pipes.

In conclusion, SSOs and other sanitary sewer problems are serious matters, and DOT is committed to dealing with them in a quick and effective way. The public plays a critical role in this effort by reporting these incidents to the City as soon as they are noticed. The public can also help prevent SSOs by not disposing items in their sinks and toilets that can block sewer pipes. Council and their staff can also assist in preventing and reducing the impacts of SSOs by providing the contact numbers and other information described in this memo to the public whenever appropriate.

/s/

HANS F. LARSEN  
Director of Transportation

For questions, please contact Kevin O’Connor, DOT Deputy Director for Infrastructure Maintenance, at 794-1987.