

News Releases

DHEC News Release: DHEC, Three Upstate POTWs Addressing PCBs Found in Systems; Seek Information on Illegal Dumping

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 22, 2013

DHEC, Three Upstate POTWs Addressing PCBs Found in Systems; Seek Information on Illegal Dumping

UPSTATE, S.C. - The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and three Upstate publicly-owned water treatment utilities are seeking information from the public regarding the illegal dumping of hazardous materials into area sewer systems. An investigation into the origin of the materials is underway by state and federal authorities.

Through routine sampling, three Upstate publicly-owned treatment works (POTWs) learned that substances containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been illegally introduced into the wastewater collection systems of each of the POTWs: Spartanburg Sanitary Sewer District (SSSD), Renewable Water Resources (ReWa), and the Town of Lyman.

The POTWs treat wastewater to remove contaminants, producing effluent water and a solid waste byproduct. Each POTW determined that the PCBs are being captured in the solid waste byproducts. The byproducts containing the PCBs are being segregated into on-site holding basins or tanks for cleanup. The POTWs have tested, and will continue to test, effluent discharges to ensure the illegal dumping does not present an environmental concern. DHEC is working with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the three POTWs, while the utilities develop plans to address the PCBs.

"Our investigation has shown that these isolated incidents of illegal dumping into our system have not adversely affected our water or sewer customers or the community," said SSSD General Manager Sue Schneider. "The low levels of PCBs found at our Fairforest and Lower North Tyger River treatment facilities are contained and we are working closely with DHEC, EPA and local authorities to resolve the situation. Appropriate protective steps have been taken to ensure that our community, our employees, our customers and the environment are protected."

"We are working closely with DHEC and EPA to dispose of the PCB-contaminated byproducts and to insure public health and the environment is protected. Our continued testing indicates the byproducts are contained within our system and no adverse impact to the environment has occurred. This is a situation caused by others illegally discharging into our system. There will be a significant cost associated with this cleanup and we are hopeful that those who created this situation will be held responsible to the fullest extent possible," said Mayor Rodney Turner of the Town of Lyman.

"In alignment with ReWa's Mission Statement to protect the public health and water quality of the Upstate, we have contained the PCB-contaminated byproducts that entered our Pelham Water Resource Recovery Facility and are working closely with DHEC and EPA to determine the appropriate disposal method" said Ray Orvin, ReWa Executive Director. "Testing indicates that there is no adverse impact on our customers, downstream users, or our biosolids program. We have increased monitoring at potential dumping sites and believe that we must take every precaution to prevent this illegal act from happening again. It is important for us to raise awareness of these types of illegal activities; we are asking anyone who might have knowledge of these actions to call Crime Stoppers."

PCBs are chemicals that were used as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, and other electrical equipment before being banned by Congress in 1979 because of evidence that they build up in the environment and can cause adverse health effects.

We ask the community to report any suspicious activities near a manhole, septage receiving facility or other location that has the potential for delivering wastewater to a treatment facility.

To report illegal discharges into a manhole, please contact Crime Stoppers at 1-864-23-CRIME, which is 1-864-232-7463, or 911 immediately. To report any other tips or information that may be helpful in identifying the source(s) of these PCBs, please contact DHEC's toll-free 24-hour emergency response line at 1-888-481-0125.

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