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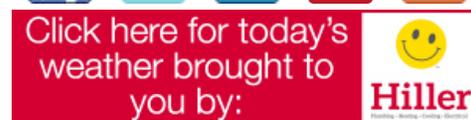
City puts in place public response plan for sewer overflows

By EMILY R. WEST
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In conjunction with the Harpeth River Watershed Association lawsuit settlement with Franklin, the city has come up with an updated response plan to handle its overflow from the sewer system.

Presented before the Board of Mayor and Alderman, the Water Department explained some of the existing and new procedures that would go into the plan, including a more ramped up public notification system when contamination ends up in waterways

"The settlement of the federal Clean Water Act lawsuit accomplished many key things, one of which focuses on providing quick public information on sewer overflows to reduce public health risks from exposure to raw sewage when it gets out of the collection lines either because of blockage or leakers that end to happen in older lines when it rains," HWRA executive director Dorie Bolze said.

During the past two years, Franklin has experienced 32 incidents. Only 10 of those overflows reached waterways. The top contributor to the problems were clogs caused by rags, with grease incidents following at a close second.

The new Sanitary Overflow Response Plan outlines the specific protocol and procedures for when blockages do occur and when they need to notify the public.

"The plan that we've developed incorporates the activities that the department currently does in response to sanitary sewer overflows," Water Department Director Mark Hilty said. "Generally, the one addition is the transparency and reporting it to the public. That is consistent with some of the efforts to not only make the community aware of them, but let them know what's widely occurred with the things they flush down."

Hilty joked that over the years, the water department has seen it all, including action figures and Legos. Depending on the severity, the Water Department will now post notifications, issue news releases, place door hangers on houses nearby and place temporary signs along the body of water affected.

The department will also post information on the city website within two days of it happening.

"In responding to these overflows, there's a distinction between water backing up in a service line versus the public infrastructure," Hilty said. "It's important for customers and the community to understand our cut off line is the property line. From that point down to the main, that's the city's responsibility. Often times, you might have things flushed down the toilet that shouldn't be. Often times you have kids, and they are flushing all sorts of things down the toilet and could end up in the public main."

Emily West covers Franklin and Williamson County government and schools for Home Page Media Group. Contact her at emily@franklinhomepage.com. Follow her on Twitter via [@emwest22](https://twitter.com/emwest22).



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