

Dear Friends:

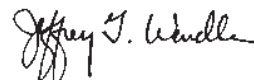
Over the past several years, in anticipation of EPA's new SSO regulations, there has been a lot of talk about sewer system Capacity, Maintenance, Operation, and Management (CMOM). Seminars about getting ready for CMOM have even been available. There is another term being discussed, GASB 34. This refers to Statement 34 from the Government Accounting Standards Board, a new system of accounting standards for public infrastructure assets. GASB 34 is now being implemented for asset management of federally funded wastewater projects. When you come to think of it, wastewater collection, conveyance, and treatment systems represent a large and valuable infrastructure asset that most people don't even think about unless there is a change in the rate structure.

Many times our first reaction to new or anticipated government requirements is something like, "Oh no, more regulations and paperwork, and for what?" To tell you the truth, when I first heard about these new requirements, my thoughts were just that. However, after being involved in fighting the battle of eliminating sanitary sewer overflows caused by excessive I/I over the past ten years, some of these ideas concerning system maintenance and asset management are starting to make sense.

While some communities have only recently had facilities installed, wastewater collection and conveyance systems constructed and paid for by our parents, grandparents, or even great grandparents, serve most communities, either totally or in part. When these pipes were buried, they were out of sight, out of mind, and generally expected to provide service "forever". Now, we are faced with an aging sanitary sewer infrastructure that is susceptible to high levels of infiltration and inflow, causing illegal sanitary sewer overflows that are no longer acceptable. Also, private building sewers and service laterals, in many cases, contribute as much or more to hydraulic overloading of sewer systems than the public sewer mains and manholes. This problem cannot be solved overnight and will take billions of dollars nationwide to fix. We can, however, begin to manage our sewer system infrastructure as the valuable asset that it is using new tools and techniques that are available. Some people are already doing it. Take a look at this website, <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/sso/greenwood/index.htm>, to see Greenwood, SC's "CMOM" program. Others are establishing long term rehabilitation and replacement programs so that sewer system capacity is maintained at more level costs rather than having a generation pick up the tab for massive repairs and replacements every fifty years or so.

Maybe now is the time, government regulations or not, to take a fresh look at sewer system infrastructure management for our benefit as well as the benefit of future generations, engaging your team of operations personnel, engineers, and accountants to develop sound technical and financial planning to insure the long-term, stable operation of your system.

Till next time,



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