

CITY OF ABERDEEN

INFILTRATION & INFLOW REDUCTON INCENTIVE PROGRAM

NOTICE OF 100% SEWER RATE INCREASE FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

APRIL 10, 1999



Dear Customer:

INFILTRATION/INFLOW STUDY RESULTS

An extensive study of the infiltration/inflow (I&I) problems within Aberdeen's sewage collection system has recently been completed. Infiltration is groundwater that enters the sewer system through defects in the piping system or sump pumps. Inflow is the surface water that enters the sewer system through illegal stormwater connections, drains and piping defects near the surface. The two sources of extraneous water are collectively referred to as Infiltration/Inflow (I&I) and represent a major problem in Aberdeen. The recently completed study shows that massive amounts of I&I enters our waste system from groundwater and during rainfall events. The I&I causes the flow to the sewer treatment plant to increase from around 2.4 million gallons per day (mgd) in dryer portions of the summer to around 6 mgd during the winter. During rainfall events, the flow can increase to over 20 mgd.

Our sewer treatment plant was designed for average monthly flows of 8 mgd and peak flows of 13 mgd. The high I&I flows related to rainfall events have created problems both in the collection and treatment systems. Problems have included surcharged sewers, sewer backups and sub-standard sewer treatment levels at the plant. In order to have an adequately sized waste treatment plant to handle the peak flows, either peak flows need to be reduced or major plant improvements will be required. The costs of future treatment plant expansions and pump station improvements to handle the peak flows caused by I&I could cost up to \$25,000,000.

The I&I study concluded that if a traditional approach were taken for I&I reduction and the past pattern of success were maintained, the inflow reduction would not be enough to ward off the need for massive expansion expenditures at the plant. Over the years, the City has maintained a program of testing sewer lines, repairing leaks and separating the stormwater system from the sanitary sewer system. Although the total I&I has been reduced, there has been insufficient reduction during rainfall events to ward off problems.

It is felt that the major part of the rainfall-induced I&I originate on private property. Typical sources of I&I would include faulty side sewers, roof drains, sump pumps, yard drains, foundation drains, faulty plumbing in crawl spaces, open inspection tees, and a number of ingenious methods used to drain rain water from private property to the sanitary sewer. The City and property owners have corrected many of these problems in the past, but there are many we were not aware of and some that have been identified and not yet corrected. The City also needs to take steps to eliminate problems with leaking manholes.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

By January 15, 2000, the City is legally bound by a District Court Consent Decree to have prepared an improvement plan schedule for all sewer system components deemed inadequate. Construction plans must be completed by July 2000 with construction completed by July 2001. A one-year extension on completion of the construction can be obtained, but during that time, the City would pay a \$1,000 fine for any day that it did not meet its EPA permit. If the City is to have any impact on reducing the cost of improvements, the peak I&I will need to be reduced by October 1999, so that the winter flows of November/December 1999 can be monitored to document the effectiveness of the I&I reduction.

The City plans to complete a major inspection program over the next several months. It is our intent to check every sewer connection for problems that create extraneous flow to the sewer system. A variety of test methods will be utilized based on the circumstances and could include smoke testing, pressure testing, remote sewer line TV inspection, water tests, dye test, visual testing, etc. Our goal is to have all improper plumbing corrected by October 1, 1999.

INCENTIVE PROGRAM

In an effort to obtain customer compliance with correcting existing problems, the City Council has approved the following I&I Incentive Program:

- All customers will receive notice of the program.
- Special additional notices will be sent to all property owners and customers where a problem is known to exist. Properties that have outstanding correction notices as of April 1, 1999 are not eligible for the incentive program.
- As additional testing is done and problems are found, additional notices will be sent to owners and customers where problems are found.
- Before commencing any work for which an incentive payment is to be given, the customer/property owner shall contact the City at 537-3284 so a City crewmember can verify what corrective action will be taken.
- The City will provide free concrete saw cutting if needed to correct the problem. Where plumbing permits are required, all fees associated with the permits will be waived.
- City is to inspect work to determine that it is a permanent solution.
- Property owners are to sign a certification that if they make any illegal connections in the future, the full amount of the incentive payment, plus interest, will become a lien on the property. The City will have the right to enter the property to make re-inspections for one year.
- Work must be completed by October 1, 1999 to be eligible for an incentive payment.

After corrective action is taken, the City will make incentive payments as follows:

- If a licensed contractor other than the customer performs work: the amount of the invoice not to exceed \$300 with a minimum of \$100.
- If work is performed by someone other than a licensed contractor: twice the value of materials used and equipment rental not to exceed \$300 but a minimum of \$100.

FINANCING

If a person feels they cannot afford to make the improvements, the possibility for alternative financing exists. The actual procedure and program is still being developed. If someone is interested in this funding, please notify the City. The current concept under development is as follows:

Anyone utilizing city financing will **not be eligible** for an incentive payment. Financing will be at \$0 down, 1% interest, monthly payments for a maximum of five years, minimum monthly payments of \$25 and a maximum loan of \$3,000. Loans will be made to owner-occupied or rental property. No loans will be made for vacant property or property that, in its current condition cannot legally be occupied. Loans will be liens on the property.

PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

The City Council is in the process of amending the sewer rate ordinance so that any property that contributes I&I to the sewer system will pay a double sewer rate bill until the problem is corrected. Non-compliance with a Notice to Correct a problem will be handled as follows:

- For occupied structures where corrective action is not completed or underway within 60 days of Notice to Correct, the sewer rate will be doubled, and will remain so until the problem is corrected.
- For undeveloped or uninhabitable property where corrective action is not completed or underway within 60 days of Notice to Correct, the City will dig up and cap the sewer stub at or near the property line.
- For all other vacant property where corrective action is not completed or underway within 60 days of Notice to Correct, the City will place a plug in the sewer line at or near the clean-out and water service will not be provided until the problem is corrected.

Any person who voluntarily contacts the City to report a problem with his plumbing which contributes to I&I before receiving a correction notice from the City and takes corrective action by October 1, 1999 will not receive double rate sewer bills. The City will start sending corrective notices on or about April 26, 1999.

We want customers to find permanent solutions and not temporary patches. For example, if a home has an illegal drain in a crawl space to keep it dewatered, the incentive payment could be utilized for not only eliminating the improper drain, but also to install a sump pump with a line out to the road to eliminate the need for an illegal drain.

Remember, if you want to receive an incentive payment for correcting a problem, the City must inspect the site prior to commencing work to verify the problem and approve the proposed solution.

Please feel free to call the City at 537-3284 and discuss any questions you may have.