

### **What is the Clean Water Act?**

The Clean Water Act is the federal legislation that governs the introduction of contaminants and pollutants into waters of the United States. This Act has as its goals that all streams should be fishable and swimmable.

### **What are (SSOs) sanitary sewer overflows and (CSOs) combined sewer overflows?**

A separate sanitary sewer system is designed to carry only wastewater to a wastewater treatment plant; a separate stormwater system is designed to carry only stormwater that is transported to ditches and streams. In a combined sewer system, both wastewater and stormwater are carried in the same set of pipes to the treatment plant.

During nearly every rain, stormwater gets into these sewer systems, which results in untreated sewage overflowing into area streams and the Ohio River. When these overflows occur in the combined sewer system, they are known as CSOs. Likewise, when such overflows occur in the separate sanitary sewer system, they are known as SSOs. These overflows are generally caused by aging sewers or illegal stormwater and groundwater connections to the sanitary sewers and can contribute to water quality problems in our streams.

### **How big is the sewage overflow problem in our community?**

Louisville has over 3,200 miles of sewer, approximately 500 miles being over 100 years old. Much of the system is in need of rehabilitation or repair. Currently, there are 111 active CSO locations and on average will overflow 30 times per year. Additionally, during a year with above-average rainfall, over 100 locations in the separate sanitary sewer system could overflow.

### **WHAT IS THE CONSENT DECREE?**

The Consent Decree is a legal document that is signed by both the community and an enforcement agency that binds the community to complete specific activities that will lead to the elimination or reduction of sewer overflows in their municipal sewer system.

### **Will sewage rates go up? I thought MSD was working on this sewage overflow problem already.**

Yes, sewer rates will go up to pay for the costs of rehabilitating our sewer system. However, it is MSD's goal to keep our sewer rates well below the national average as we have in

years past. MSD has already spent more than \$150 million over the past 5 years to reduce the impacts of CSOs and SSOs. Much improvement has been accomplished, but there is still much more to be done.

**An 8 inch  
sewer pipe is  
designed to carry sewage  
from 200 homes.**

**4 basement sump pumps  
connected illegally  
can cause a  
sewer overflow.**

## Is Louisville's problem unique, or are other communities facing similar problems?

No, Louisville's problem is not unique. Wastewater systems across the nation, including many in our state, are facing the same problems of aging infrastructure and increasingly strict regulations. Many cities have already entered into similar enforcement actions, such as Louisville's Consent Decree. EPA has made it a priority to bring all cities with similar problems into compliance.

## What should I do in the event of a sewer overflow?

The most important thing to do is to stay away from water in ditches, streams and the river during and for 48 hours after rainfall. This is when overflows are most likely to occur. In the event

of a sewer system failure, overflows may occur during dry weather.

If you do come into contact with water that has been contaminated by a sewer overflow, you should wash with soap and warm water before touching any surfaces, persons or food.

MSD is placing warning signs along streams.



## Are there health risks if contact is made with this contaminated water?

The health risks depends on how long and how much contact one has. For example, if contaminated water is swallowed while swimming, one might become ill and need to seek medical attention. If the contact is external - skin only - then a thorough washing with soap and warm water will be sufficient to kill any bacteria one has encountered. The best thing to do is avoid the contaminated water altogether.



MSD

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MSD will be distributing door hangers within a couple of blocks of any overflows after a storm. If you have any concerns or questions please contact MSD.