

SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN SEWER DISTRICT

June 2005



Ratepayer News

YOUR SEWER DOLLARS GO TO WORK FOR YOU

Inside this issue:

Your Sewer Dollars Go to Work for You	1
Forms Available Online	1
Call the District Before Incurring Costly Repairs	2
Spouting Toilets	2
Grease Policy	3
Smoke Testing is Underway	3
Bill Format is Changing	4

On June 10th, the District opened bids for the construction of 8,116 feet of replacement sewer pipe ranging from 8" to 12" in diameter. The low bidder was Buno Construction, LLC with a bid of \$1,492,314 excluding sales tax. The engineer's estimate was \$1,564,215, indicating that the District received a competitive bid. The District received five other bids ranging to a high bid of \$1,812,152. The total cost of the project including engineering and inspection will be approximately two million dollars.

The construction is scheduled to start on July 11th and should be complete by September 9th. The area of construction is bordered on the north by SW 100th Street, on the west by 19th Avenue SW, on the south by SW 104th Street, and on the east by 16th Avenue SW. The project will be known as the "Regal Heights Rehabilitation Project".

Most of the pipe replacement will be open cut construction, however there will be some pipe bursting, which involves pulling a new plastic pipe through the old concrete pipe. The District used this and a variety of other methods in its last major rehabilitation project in 1998-1999. In addition to sewer main lines,



Groundbreaking at Regal Heights Rehabilitation Project

From left to right: Commissioners Bill Tracy, Tony Genzale, and Scott Hilsen

the manholes and 6" stubs to the property line will be replaced.

The District is also working on a number of other projects, including:

- A retaining wall at the Salmon Creek Treatment Plant.
- An Emergency Generator at Pump Station #18 in Normandy Park.
- Update of the Operations Manuals for the two wastewater treatment plants.
- Two District Extensions on 14th Avenue SW and SW 126th Street to provide sewer service to properties with failed septic systems.

- Inspection of the sewer line construction for the Housing Authority in White Center.

"This is the first of many sewer line rehabilitation projects", says Board President Tony Genzale. "It is important to us that the ratepayers are able to see that their money is going into maintaining and upgrading our sewer system and facilities. We have line rehabilitation projects in the planning stage for Burien and Normandy Park as well as more rehabilitation planned for White Center. Our ratepayers have the right to expect their sewer fees to go into the system."

FORMS AVAILABLE ONLINE

You may access forms online from the District website at www.swssd.com for the following:

- Low Income Reduced Rate
- Electronic Payment of Sewer Bill

You may also download a list of approved Small Works Contractors or Side Sewer Contractors.

CALL YOUR SEWER DISTRICT BEFORE INCURRING COSTLY REPAIRS . . . IT COULD SAVE YOU THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS!

If you experience problems with your sewer, call the District before signing a contract that could potentially cost you thousands of dollars. You may contact the district either via the main telephone number at 206-244-9575 Monday thru Friday from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm, or by calling the emergency phone number after hours or on weekends or holidays at 206-726-2732. The SWSSD employee responding to your call will determine if the problem is in the District system, or in your plumbing or private side sewer.

If the problem is in the District system, we will respond to repair the problem. If the problem is in your private system, the District will assist you to determine the cause of the problem and the most cost-

effective way to repair it.

If your private sewer line must be dug up and repaired because of a break, roots in the line, or some other problem, don't sign a contract for sewer repair work without contacting Southwest Suburban Sewer District first! A permit is required from the District office to have your line repaired. Don't sign a contract to have your sewer line dug up and repaired unless you or your contractor have consulted with the District first. Part of the permitting process includes verification of adequate insurance coverage and valid business licensing. The District can provide you with its small works contractor and side sewer contractor lists to select a District approved contractor.

We further recommend that you get a number of written bids for the repair work. The difference in quotes can be very substantial, sometimes thousands of dollars. Check with the District if you have any questions about the cost or extent of the proposed work.

According to Commissioner Scott Hilsen, "A simple call to your District can save you thousands of dollars. Just recently a ratepayer paid over eight thousand dollars to repair his side sewer. Looking at the amount of work that had to be done, it probably should have only been a couple of thousand dollars. Had he contacted the District prior to making that commitment, he very likely would have saved a substantial sum."

Do not sign a contract to have your sewer line dug up and repaired unless you have consulted with the District first. "A simple call to your District can save you thousands of dollars."

Commissioner Scott Hilsen

WHAT'S A "SPOUTING TOILET"?

Our crew cleans the main sewer lines using a truck mounted machine called a high velocity pipe cleaner. This machine pumps 60 gallons of water per minute through a one inch inside diameter hose at up to 2000 psi. Attached to the end of the hose is either a nozzle with a series of small orifices to scour debris out of the pipe or a hydraulic motor with a saw blade attached to cut roots out of the line.

The water under pressure moves a large volume of air that has to escape somewhere. Most of the time the air will go up the plumbing vents on the roof of the house with no effect on the system. Sometimes the vents don't work like they are supposed to. This can be because they are undersized in an older house or they could be partially plugged. If this is the case the air has to go somewhere and it will take the path of least resistance, in this case the large pipe going to the toilet.

This air pressure causes the toilet to spout the water that is in the bowl. **THIS IS NOT SEWAGE BEING BLOWN BACK FROM THE MAINLINE.** Sometimes the air will draw the water out of the toilet bowl. To prevent the possibility of water spouting from your toilet we highly recommend that you keep your toilet seat cover closed, particularly if you have a toilet in a basement.

What to do if your toilet does spout? Call the District office at 244-9575. We will put your house on our list of spouting toilets and make an effort to contact you prior to cleaning the sewer line on your street if at all possible.

FATS, OILS AND GREASE POLICY ESTABLISHED

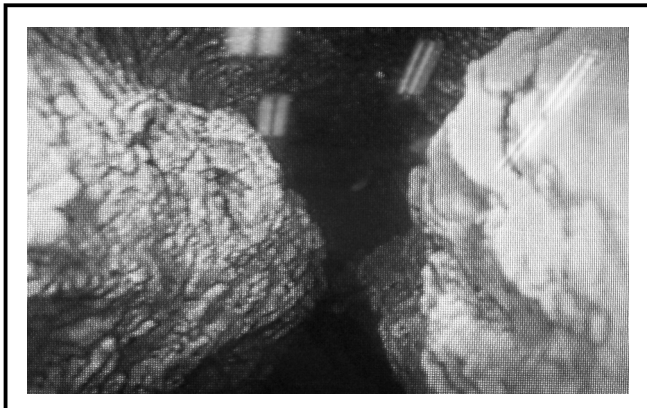
Grease is a problem that affects everyone in our sewer district. Small amounts of grease from washing dishes or just dumping it down the drain enter the sanitary sewer lines and begin to build up on the walls of the sewer pipes causing blockages that can back up homes and businesses. Most people think they can dilute grease with hot water and the problem is gone. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Grease begins to cool and re-solidify once it enters the sewer pipe.

In January 2005, the District established a FOG Policy (Fats, Oils and Grease) for our commercial customers. Under the new policy, all commercial entities discharging fats, oils or grease to the sewer system must install a grease trap or grease interceptor to assist with keeping our sewer lines from plugging. The FOG Policy will aid in keeping sewer rates low as plugged lines have cost ratepayers thousands of dollars for repair and maintenance.

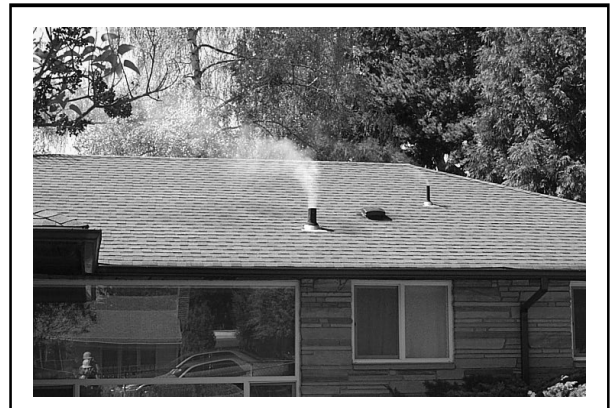
To date, we have had good response from our commercial ratepayers. Our target is to have grease traps or grease interceptors installed in all of our commercial customers facilities that generate fats, oils or grease by the end of 2007.

Residential customers can assist by disposing of fats, oils or grease in the garbage by wiping the cooking utensil with a paper towel prior to washing.

Remember, ***grease affects all of our rate payers.*** If you think your facility may need a grease trap or grease interceptor, contact Darren Hill or Jodie Baker at (206) 244-9575 for information and assistance.



Grease lines the interior of an 8" sewer line in the above photo. Buildup of this type eventually clogs sewer lines.



The above photo shows smoke from District smoke testing exiting a vent in a home with proper internal plumbing.

SMOKE TESTING FOR IMPROPER CONNECTIONS IS UNDERWAY

In an on-going effort to maintain the sewage collection system and eliminate surface and/or ground water from entering the sewer lines SWSSD maintenance crews are performing smoke testing on a periodic basis in various locations. So what is smoke testing? A blower is used to force a non-toxic, non-staining smoke into the sewer lines and the crew will check for smoke coming out of the plumbing vents on the roof of buildings. This is normal and what we expect and hope to find. One of the problems that we are looking for is smoke coming out of the ground, which indicates that there is a broken pipe that may let water into the system or sewage to leak out into the ground. If the break is large enough it may be a portal for vermin to enter the system.

The other problem that we are looking for is smoke coming out of down spouts, gutters and catch basins. These should not be hooked into the sanitary sewer system, but rather into the storm system in the street. When it rains the added water causes capacity problems with the sewer system and may cause the lines to back up and sewage to overflow and possibly enter a residence or business.

So will smoke get in your house or business? Not if the internal plumbing is in good condition. IF smoke enters your building there is a problem with the plumbing. Common problems include sinks that have been removed and the drain pipe was not capped, a hole in a drain pipe, or a

damaged wax ring on a toilet. Another possible place for smoke to enter is through a floor drain. The drains have a trap in them designed to hold a small amount of water to keep sewer gases out of the building. If these dry out there is nothing to stop the smoke or gases from entering. Pouring water down each drain several times a year will keep them functioning properly.

IF smoke enters the building, remember that it is non-toxic. But that means there is a problem that needs to be repaired to keep sewer gasses and odors out of your building. If smoke testing is coming to your area, a hangtag will be placed on your door informing you in advance of the testing.

A NEW LOOK TO YOUR SEWER BILLS!

Over the past several years we have had numerous requests from our ratepayers for another form of billing other than the 4 x 6 postcard currently used, and for a return envelope for mailing in payments. It has always been the District's goal to keep the administrative cost of producing bills to a lower affordable rate. But it has come to a matter of convenience and compliance with our ratepayer's requests.

If all software adaptations and pretests succeed, our customers should be receiving their new bills by August or September 1st. The new look will be an 8 1/2" x 11" bill with a tear-off stub to be re-

turned to the District in the provided remittance envelope. According to Commissioner Bill Tracy, "our customers have been asking for these changes for a long time."

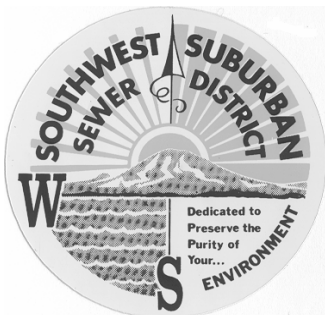
As a reminder, the District also offers the electronic bill payment method, and a discount rate for low income households. If you would like further information, either visit our website at www.swssd.com or contact the main office at 206-244-9575. The District office is open weekdays from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm for in person payments.



The new bill format will include an envelope in which to submit your payment.

KING COUNTY RECORDING FEES TO INCREASE

BY 69%: Effective August 1, 2005, the King County Record's Office will be increasing the cost of document recording by 69%, which includes a surcharge for the homeless of \$10.00 per recording. The higher cost will be reflected in the charge for lien fees on delinquent accounts. Effective August 1, 2005 the lien fee charge will be raised to \$95.00. All accounts over 6 months in arrears have a potential of lien. Avoid lien fees—payments are due 30 days after billing date.



431 SW Ambaum Boulevard
Burien, Washington 98166

Phone: 206-244-9575

Fax: 206-433-8546

www.swssd.com

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 879

You are invited to attend the monthly Board of Commissioners meetings at the District Office on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 6:00 p.m.

Due to the July 4th Holiday, the Next Board Meeting will be Tuesday, July 12th @ 6:00 p.m.