

PIPELINE



VITAL INFORMATION ON SANITARY SERVICE
FOR OUR RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT

Time's Almost Up!

**Amnesty Period
for Legalizing
Sewer Connections
Ends June 30**

If you have an unpermitted (bootlegged and illegal) sewer connection, and come forward voluntarily before July 1 to correct the situation, you can save between \$3,800 and \$4,800 in fines and penalties.

Ojai Valley Sanitary District (OVSD) officials say there are hundreds of local property owners who have unpermitted sewer connections, most often from illegally converted garages and granny flats. Many of these property owners have been collecting monthly rents from tenants of these second residences for years.

"All the while, these violators have been getting away with not paying their fair share for sanitary sewer service," said John K. Correa, P.E. OVSD General Manager. "This is an important issue because the sewer rates paid by the customers throughout the District are subsidizing these unpermitted connections."

The OVSD Board of Directors last year adopted a program to address the illegal sewer connection problem in the interest of fairness to be sure that nobody gets away with being served for free and that everyone is treated equally

tors starting July 1, 2010. During this amnesty period, the District agreed to waive all unpaid sewer service charges, penalties and fines for those property owners who voluntarily notify the District of their unpermitted connections and take the steps necessary to permit those illegal connections. In order to permit the connection, the property owner must pay certain fees and charges, including applicable capacity charges and regular sewer service charges. (See sidebar: "It's the Law.")

So far, only a few property owners with illegal sewer connection have come forward to take the District up on its offer, and the year-long amnesty phase is ending at the close of business June 30, 2011.

Enforcement Period Begins July 1, 2011

During the second phase, from July 1, 2011-onward, all property owners with unpermitted residential connections will be subject to up to three years' unpaid sewer service charges, fines, penalties and

Continued on reverse.



It's the Law

Local property owners with unpermitted (bootlegged and illegal) sewer connections must inevitably correct the situation by settling up with the Ojai Valley Sanitary District. At this point, these sewer connection violators have a choice as to how much they will be required to pay. As in so many areas of life, timing is everything. There are stark differences between the charges during the amnesty period (ending June 30, 2011) and the enforcement phase from July 1, 2011 onward—as the figures below indicate.

During the Amnesty Period (Ending June 30, 2011)

Most property owners who come forward voluntarily to notify the Ojai Valley Sanitary District of the illegal connection pay the following to correct the problem and permit the connection:

Connection-related capacity charges:	\$15,400.00
Fees, including current year's sewer service charge:	\$800.00
TOTAL:	\$16,200.00

During the Enforcement Period (July 1, 2011-Onward)

Most property owners who have not notified the Sanitary District (in accordance with the ordinance) of the illegal sewer connection or taken any effort to correct it during the amnesty period receive a letter from the District. A District inspection of the property is performed to confirm or deny the presence of the unpermitted connection. The property owner receives a Notice of Violation from the District, and is liable for the following charges, fines and penalties:

Connection-related capacity charges:	\$15,400.00
Fees, including current year's sewer service charge:	\$800.00
Additional Fees & Penalties:	\$3,784.57
TOTAL:	\$19,984.57

**JUNE
30** **Amnesty Ends
June 30, 2011**

Phase One of the program was a year of amnesty for viola-

**ESTIMATED SAVINGS FOR
COMPLIANCE DURING AMNESTY \$3,784.57**

Toss Unused Drugs

The Right Way



Flow of such chemicals into the river poses a threat to the aquatic environment in several ways, including interfering with growth and reproduction in aquatic organisms. Exposure to hormones such as those present in birth control pills or estrogen replacement products appears to cause sexual mutations in fish and frogs.

To Safely Dispose of Unused or Outdated Drugs Ojai Valley Sanitary District Officials Offer These Recommendations:

- ▶ Keep the medications in their original containers, scratching your name off to protect your privacy. Bag them, put the bag into a sturdy box and place it into the trash close to the time rubbish is picked up. Or in the alternative, avail yourself of this community take-back program:
- ▶ Drop off your unused medications at the Ojai Police Department, 402 S. Ventura St. Ojai.

A vast array of pharmaceuticals—including antibiotics, anti-convulsants, mood stabilizers and sex hormones—have been found in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans, according to an Associated Press investigation.

Because the amount of the drugs found in our water supply is hundreds or thousands of times lower than the quantity found in the medications we take, it is not clear what the potential harm is to humans. However, research has shown that there can be dramatic effects on animals that live in the aquatic habitat, such as fish and frogs.

One major way that drugs get into rivers, streams and drinking water supplies is improper disposal of unused or expired medications by people who flush them down the toilet or pour them down the drain.

Locally, if you flush unused or expired medications down the toilet, you're in effect flushing them directly into the Ventura River.

That's because the Ojai Valley Sanitary District's Wastewater Treatment Plant processes—like all sewage treatment plants—are unable to remove many chemicals present in prescription, over-the-counter, and veterinary drugs, or personal care products. This is due to the chemical structure and potency of even miniscule amounts of xenobiotic chemicals.

Scientists are also concerned that the presence of medications in surface water bodies may increase bacterial resistance to antibiotics.

Increasingly, public health authorities and sanitation experts across the nation are educating people on the importance of proper disposal of unused medications. More and more people are taking advantage of drug take-back programs in their communities that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal.

One such effort locally is a collaboration begun last year between the Ventura County Sheriff's Department and the Ventura County Public Health Department. Both agencies are concerned about the environmental impacts, and as well about children and teens who are increasingly getting their hands on pain killers, stimulants and other drugs left around the house.

One in five teens has tried Vicodin, one in ten has tried Oxycontin or Ritalin and one in eleven has admitted to getting high on cough medicine, according to the Partnership for a Drug Free America.

Since last June, the county program has collected more than 2,700 pounds of old drugs. The Sheriff's Department has drop-off locations at county jails and all of its stations.

Continued from front.

Time's Almost Up!

other District costs related to correcting the unpermitted connection, plus applicable capacity charges and regular sewer service charges.

After June 30, 2011, the District will be actively identifying suspected unpermitted connections through lawfully conducted inspections. "We have already identified more than 100 apparent violators," said Correa.

These will be the first to get letters from the District discussing the alleged violation and notifying the owner of District officials' right, under the law, to enter the property for an inspection to verify the violation.

Legal Rights and Obligations Spelled Out

If an unpermitted connection exists, the District will serve the property owner a "Notice of Violation" by certified mail. Among other things, this notice will:

- State the nature and grounds for the violation and provide contact information by which the owner may contact the District regarding the Notice.
- State the total amount that the owner must pay the District to correct the violation, detailing all charges.
- Advise that correction of the violation requires the owner to pay the District the specified charges within 60 days of the date the

owner was served with the Notice of Violation.

- Advise that the owner has a right to a hearing and appeal on the matter and describe how the owner may request a hearing and appeal.
- Advise that if the owner does not pay the amount demanded in the Notice of Violation within 60 days, then the amount will be considered delinquent and unpaid charges subject to collection as part of the annual taxes next levied on the property, and will constitute a lien on the property.

Another Option to Consider

Under the District's new enforcement policies, property own-

ers with an unpermitted residential connection have the option, with no cost imposed by the District, of voluntarily disconnecting the unpermitted sewer connection or altering the use of the offending structure so that its sewer connection does not require a permit.

If you're interested in legalizing an unpermitted sewer connection or need additional information about disconnecting an unpermitted sewer connection, call the District's Customer Service Representative, Laurie Johnson, at (805) 646-5548.

The complete ordinance addressing unpermitted connections can be viewed on the District's website at www.ojaisan.org.

PIPELINE

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