



VITAL INFORMATION ON SANITARY SERVICE  
FOR OUR RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT

# The Clock is Ticking for Sewer Connection Violators



a basically non-punitive pathway to correct what in many cases have been long-standing violations.

“This is an important issue because the sewer rates paid by the majority are subsidizing these unpermitted connections,” said John K. Correa, P.E., OVSD General Manager. “We are engaging in this new program in the interest of fairness—making sure that nobody gets away with being served for free. It’s all a matter of treating people equally and seeing to it that everybody plays by the rules.

“There’s still some time left, and we’re hoping that our District customers who are in violation will accept the opportunity to make things right with minimum consequences to themselves and their pocketbooks,” said Correa.

## Enforcement Measure Has Two Phases

During the first phase (which began July 1, 2010 and continues through June 30, 2011) the District will 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 will have to pay certain fees and charges, including applicable capacity charges and regular sewer service charges.

During the second phase (from June 30, 2011 forward), all property owners with unpermitted residential connections will be subject to up to three years’ unpaid sewer service charges, fines, penalties and other District costs related to correcting the unpermitted connection plus applicable capacity charges and regular sewer service charges.

During the second phase, the District will be actively identifying unpermitted connections through lawfully conducted inspections.

“We have already identified more than 100 apparent violators,” said Correa.

Under the District’s new enforcement policies, property owners 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. In addition, there are procedures established by which property owners will be duly noticed and provided an opportunity to be heard regarding an alleged unpermitted residential sewer connection.

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

## Time is Running Out

Ojai Valley property owners with unpermitted (bootlegged and illegal) sewer connections have only six months left to come forward voluntarily, correct the situation and get off without a penalty.

If violators take steps to correct their unpermitted connections by first notifying the Ojai Valley Sanitary District (OVSD) within the grace period ending June 30, 2011, they will avoid unpaid sewer services fees, fines, and penalties—which in the aggregate can be considerable.

It’s known that hundreds of local property owners have unpermitted sewer connections, most often from illegally converted garages and granny flats. These violators have been getting away with not paying their fair share for sanitary sewer service for years.

Since the grace period began July 1 of this year, a few residents have inquired about the program, but none has come forward to become properly permitted. That surprises and disappoints District officials, who feel the new enforcement ordinance offers

The complete ordinance addressing unpermitted connections can be viewed on the District’s website at [www.ojaisan.org](http://www.ojaisan.org).

# A Brief History of Sanitation

## Continued

For much of U.S. history, the outhouse or “privy” was a common feature of life. The nation has had a somewhat checkered history of wastewater management, as these random highlights and lowlights suggest:

- In Boston, prior to the 1700s, many homes were sewered to the nearest streams, via hollowed-out logs.
- Chicago in 1850 developed plans to build a comprehensive system of “combined” sewers, recognized as the first comprehensive sewage system in the U.S. Unfortunately, the combined systems were designed to drain into the Chicago River. This in turn led to Lake Michigan, the main source of water for Chicago. In 1885, a heavy storm caused the raw sewage in the Chicago River to be flushed out to the Lake’s drinking water intake points. The typhoid and cholera epidemics resulting from this debacle killed an estimated 11 to 13% of the population
- Baltimore was one of the last American cities to ban the use of cesspools. In 1915 it became one of the last and largest American cities to install a comprehensive sewage collection system.
- The construction of sewer systems did not necessarily mean that sewage was being handled safely in the 19th and even 20th centuries. In the 20th century, for example, raw sewage from coastal cities was still being intentionally discharged through sewer pipes into the ocean.

In the 1920s, Los Angeles and many of the independent cities in Los Angeles County were sewered. Not to be outdone, the City of Ojai built its own sewer collection system and sewage treatment plant in the late 1920s, quite an accomplishment for a town so small. In contrast, the unincorporated areas of the Ojai Valley—Meiners Oaks, Mira Monte, Oak View, Casitas Springs and Ventura Avenue area—did not have sewer service until the 1960s. Residents of those areas relied on septic tanks.

Meanwhile, the City of Ojai’s collection system was expanding, driven by population increases, but the city failed to make the necessary investments to update, expand and modernize its treatment plant. Locals became aware of this by the 1950s and 1960s when they started noticing that San Antonio Creek was full of soapsuds.

In the early 1960s, as sewers were constructed in the unincorporated areas of the Valley, the Oak View Treatment Plant was built. The City of Ojai was only too happy to hook up to the new treatment plant.

In 1985, as the result of the consolidation of the Ventura Avenue, Oak View and Meiners Oaks Sanitary Districts and the Sanitation Department of the City of Ojai, the Ojai Valley Sanitary District was formed. The District has been serving the area ever since, constantly updating itself and its facilities and adhering to the highest environmental standards.

## How to Avert a Stinking Mess

If you’ve ever endured the stress, strain and stench of a sewage backup into your home, chances are you’ll do everything in your power to see that it never happens again.

Whether you’ve experienced a backup or not, you can reduce the risk that it will happen in the future—with a little easy, preventive maintenance: keep fats, oils and greases (FOG) out of your drains.

Grease congeals and hardens in your lateral (the underground pipe in your yard that carries wastewater from your house to the Sanitary District sewer line under the street). The congealing grease can cause blockages and, sometimes, sewage backups.

- Pour off grease from pans into a disposable container and deposit it into the trash.
- Wipe down all pots, pans and utensils thoroughly with paper towels before washing them and place the towels into your garbage receptacle.

In addition to FOG, there’s another potential threat to your laterals, right out in your yard. Avoid planting trees and shrubs directly above the lateral. Roots commonly grow into sewer laterals, particularly at the joints, and can cause major blockages.



## OVSD: Behind the Scenes, Working for You

Some local residents might wonder just what it is that the Ojai Valley Sanitary District actually does.

The short answer is we protect our environment. In so doing, we help maintain the health and well-being of area residents. To accomplish these responsibilities, we:

- Take care of the Valley’s wastewater collection system—120 miles of underground sewer pipelines between the east end of the Ojai Valley and Shell Road at Highway 33—continually cleaning, repairing and rebuilding the pipelines as needed.
- Operate a Wastewater Treatment Plant, which treats the sewage from homes and businesses using natural biological processes. After the process cleans the

water and makes it safe for the environment, the water is dispatched into the Ventura River.

- Respond promptly to emergencies.
- Operate an array of specialized equipment needed to clean and maintain the collection system.
- Keep up with scientific advances in our field and comply with ever-changing environmental regulations.
- Conduct public education programs.
- Manage our resources in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Take a proactive approach to environmental protection for the present and the future.

The Ojai Valley Sanitary District might be out of sight and, for the most part, out of mind; but remember, some of the most basic conveniences you take for granted every day—sinks that drain, toilets that flush, sewers that don’t leak—are there because OVSD is diligently serving the needs of our community.



PIPELINE

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