



News Release

South Tahoe Public Utility District
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Sewage Spills into Fallen Leaf Lake

South Lake Tahoe, CA (June 29, 2018) – At 7:44pm on Thursday, June 28, 2018, South Tahoe Public Utility District received a call from 369 Fallen Leaf Lake Road reporting a possible sewer back-up. Upon inspection, the District confirmed a sewer blockage on the private sewer lateral with some spilled sewage pooling around the private manhole. Recognizing the potential for the blockage to cause a sewer spill into Fallen Leaf Lake, the District immediately responded and worked through the night to break the blockage and minimize damages. At midnight, the blockage was cleared and the backed up sewage gushed downhill through the sewer lateral. The rupture overloaded the capacity of the District's vactor truck, which was stationed at the downhill manhole to suction out the overflow. Ten gallons of sewage spilled into Fallen Leaf Lake.

“Our crew realized that once the line was unplugged, a freight train of sewage would flow downhill and surcharge the District’s manhole at the bottom of the hill. This particular manhole sits only 10 feet from the edge of Fallen Leaf Lake,” said Richard Solbrig, the District’s General Manager. “The crew’s foresight to station the District’s vactor truck at the downhill manhole, resulted in 99% of the sewage overflow to be captured. The crew’s quick response time and foresight dramatically minimized the damage caused by the spill.”

“If a private plumber had cleared the stoppage, the District’s vactor truck would not have been there to suck up the overflow. The manhole cover would have lifted off and over 1,800 gallons of sewage would have spilled into Fallen Leaf Lake in the middle of the night,” says Richard Jones, the District’s Underground Repair Sewer Leadman.

At 4:40am, the District’s lab took water samples at the point of entry, 60 feet into the lake, and 60 feet east and west along the shore of the spill. All four samples resulted in no detectable levels of ammonia. The blockage is thought to have been caused by a chunk of asphalt found in the sewer line.

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