



News Release

South Tahoe Public Utility District
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What To Do During Floods and Power Outages

South Lake Tahoe, CA (January 4, 2023) – The new year continues to bring heavy snow and rain. This is great for water supply, but very challenging for utilities. During power outages, South Tahoe Public Utility District asks customers to conserve water, as all the water and sewer pumps are running on emergency generators. If your neighborhood is flooding, the wastewater collection system and treatment plant is likely being inundated. Do not open manholes. Run sump pumps into the storm drain and not into the sewer system.

During the last big storm, South Tahoe Public Utility District's wastewater treatment plant's inflow more than doubled. "During the winter holidays, we normally treat around 4 million gallons a day of wastewater," said Jeff Lee, Plant Manager at the District. "This New Year's Eve, almost 11 million gallons of wastewater came into the plant." The District's wastewater treatment plant is designed to treat and export 7.7 million gallons per day. "We had to divert flow into our emergency retention basins to prevent a spill," said Lee.

The District's emergency retention basins are located at the corner of Black Bart and Pioneer Trail and can hold 58 million gallons. The last time the District pumped high flows to the emergency retention basins was during the historic winter storms of 2017 and 1997. These basins were built for this purpose and help to protect Lake Tahoe from wastewater spills.

During rain on snow events, meadows flood. Sewer mains and manholes located in the meadows take on water, resulting in extremely high flows into the treatment plant. Compounding this issue is when manholes are intentionally opened or when individual sump pumps run into the sewer system, which is illegal.

Water and sewer crews work 24/7 during extreme weather events to refuel back-up generators and keep the systems operating. Help do your part to ensure reliable water delivery, wastewater collection, and prevent wastewater spills by conserving water during power outages, running sump pumps into storm drains, and not removing manholes. If you see a manhole cover that has been moved during a storm, contact the District immediately at 530-544-6474.

"The District is proud that we have not violated any of our waste discharge requirements for over 27 years," said Lee. "While these storms stress our systems, we continue to maintain reliability and meet the challenge."



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