

Report Highlights

Sanitary Sewer Overflow Prevention Performance Audit October 2019



The Long Beach Water Department (LBWD) oversees the operations on 712 miles of sewer lines, including the collection of nearly 45 million gallons of sanitary sewage per day. In 2014-2018, Long Beach experienced 103 Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs). The majority of SSOs in Long Beach were Category 3 which are not severe. Category 3 SSOs are less than 1,000 gallons of wastewater and do not reach surface water. However, the City did have more SSOs than similarly-sized jurisdictions. The potential adverse impacts of SSOs include environmental damage, public health risks, beach closures, business closures, damage to property, and financial costs and penalties against the City.

Main Audit Takeaway: The number of SSO incidents in Long Beach has stayed relatively consistent in the past three years. The City needs to align its SSO prevention activities to the goal of reducing SSOs and monitor the effectiveness of those activities.

Relevant Information

Key Findings

Sewer Operations

SSOs occur when sewage is discharged from a sanitary sewer system into the environment.



Despite LBWD meeting its preventative maintenance and repair targets in recent years, the annual number of SSOs has not declined, with an average of 21 SSOs per year.



The list of needed sewer repairs is growing. The number of sewer line repairs awaiting completion increased by 62% from 2014 to 2018.

Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG)

SSOs can be caused by blockages that form in the pipe due to the presence of FOG, tree roots, or structural defects.



71% of SSOs are caused by FOG. Activities aimed at preventing FOG-related SSOs need improvements:

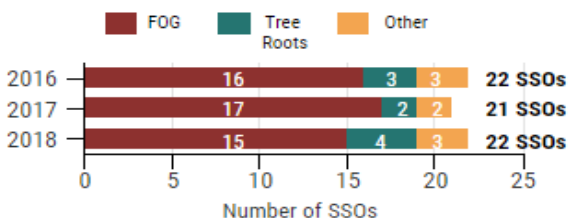


FOG Inspections are not being conducted at all food facilities that produce FOG. Of 81 FOG-prone franchise brands, 34% did not receive FOG inspections at all locations.



Residential outreach efforts did not always connect residents to their role in preventing FOG-related SSOs.

Causes of SSOs:



Expectations for the proper disposal of FOG are not comprehensively communicated to food facilities.



The checklist used by Health inspectors lacks necessary details to ensure thorough FOG inspections.

CITY AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Review preventative maintenance and repair targets, revise them as needed, and monitor those activities.
- Identify methods to speed up the repair process and prioritize the completion of severe repairs.
- Identify FOG-prone food facilities and inspect them regularly for FOG violations.
- Provide more outreach education on FOG disposal and SSO prevention to residents.
- Create a comprehensive FOG best practices document to clearly state expectations for food facilities.
- Update the FOG Inspection checklist to include specific requirements.

THE DEPARTMENTS AGREED WITH ALL RECOMMENDATIONS AND WILL IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING:

- Reassess maintenance targets and develop a system that will monitor their effectiveness.
- Incorporate trenchless technology to expedite the rate at which repairs are completed.
- Use multiple sources to identify all FOG-prone food facilities and ensure they receive FOG inspections.
- Develop more educational materials and expand efforts to reach residents.
- Create and distribute materials for food facilities that align with City regulations to ensure compliance.
- Update the current FOG Inspection checklist to include specific requirements.