OPEN CHANNEL *NEWS*

News bulletin from Metropolitan Council Environmental Services

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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Environmental Services is one of three primary organizational divisions of the Metropolitan Council, a regional public agency working for the seven-county metropolitan area. Our mission is to partner, plan, and provide services to protect our region's water. This includes wastewater services and integrated planning to ensure sustainable water quality and water supply for the region.

The Industrial Waste and Pollution Prevention (IWPP) section of the Met Council regulates and monitors more than 900 industrial customers discharging to the sanitary sewer systems. Our goal is to ensure compliance with local and federal regulations and reduce the amount of pollution entering the wastewater collection system. IWPP also responds to sewer-related spills and community sewer problems. These functions protect Met Council and community wastewater collection and treatment facilities, process efficiency, operating personnel, and the environment.

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For more than half a century, sewer charge keeps wastewater system sustainable



Keeping wastewater treatment rates affordable while supporting regional economic development is a Metropolitan Council goal. The nearly three million residents in the seven-county metro region served by our wastewater system pay 36% less than the national average to flush and drain used water from their homes, according to a 2024 national survey of peer agencies.

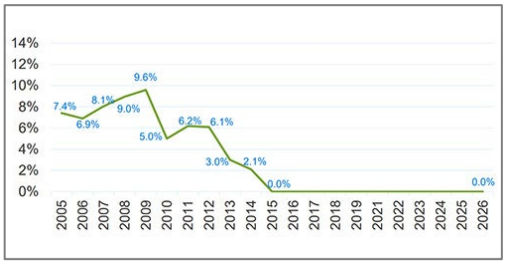
Wastewater pipes and water resource recovery facilities, which are critical for protecting public health and our environment, are expensive to build and maintain. And the infrastructure must be large enough to serve both current and future customers.

An important tool the Met Council uses to keep fees for current users lower is the Sewer Availability Charge (SAC). SAC funds are used to pay the construction costs of the additional system capacity needed for future users.

The SAC program was established in 1973 and is a critical component of how the Met Council ensures the long-term system sustainability of wastewater infrastructure. In 2025, the Met Council passed a notable milestone: one million SAC unit collections.

SAC fee based on potential demand

SAC is a one-time fee that communities pay when a new residence or business connects to the regional sewer system or when a business expands or changes its use, increasing potential wastewater demand. Unlike water and sewer bills, which are based on actual usage, SAC is based on maximum potential wastewater demand. It ensures that the system has the necessary capacity to meet peak needs.



SAC fees are applied consistently across communities and building permit authorities in the seven-county metro area. These fees are typically incorporated into permit and license costs and passed on by communities to businesses and property owners. The rate for one SAC unit is $2,485. The Met Council has not raised the fee since 2014.

For more than half a century, sewer charge keeps wastewater system sustainable continues...

Important dates:

- October 15, 2026 – Liquid Waste Hauler quarterly reports due via the Industrial Online Reporting System
- October 31, 2026 – Standard and Special quarterly reports due via the Industrial Online Reporting System

“One of the most frequent misunderstandings people have about SAC is thinking it is based on actual water and sewer use. It’s not,” said Jessie Nye, manager of the SAC program. “SAC is based on the maximum potential discharge from food preparation, dishwashing, and other domestic use on its busiest day of the year, rather than its average daily operations." The Met Council must build the treatment system to anticipate peak volumes.

Met Council engineers and external consultants set criteria for the charge based on water studies, as well as building, plumbing, and health codes. Communities also have flexibility in how they manage SAC charges and credits through their own ordinances and community policies.

SAC team works to make program more accessible

The SAC team is committed to simplifying and improving the program through annual updates, training, and customer service enhancements. Recent efforts include improving website accessibility, offering SAC materials in multiple languages, and partnering to explore financial support options for public housing and deeply affordable housing projects.

The SAC program is a key component in the 2050 Water Policy Plan, ensuring equitable and sustainable wastewater management for future generations. For additional information, visit the SAC program webpage.

Energy project at Blue Lake earns Met Council big rebate



The Metropolitan Council earned a rebate of nearly $153,000 in April from CenterPoint Energy for natural gas savings. The savings resulted from an energy recovery project at the Blue Lake Water Resource Recovery Facility in Shakopee.

The recently completed project helps convert a byproduct of wastewater processing, renewable biogas, into energy to operate the facility.

"Millions of gallons of wastewater flow to our facilities daily, carrying an enormous, untapped energy resource — and we're unlocking it," said Leisa Thompson, general manager of Met Council Environmental Services.

"From raw wastewater heat to the stored energy in biosolids, this project transforms how we think about wastewater treatment,” Thompson said. “We aren't just cleaning water; we're turning treatment facilities into energy generators — reducing our operational costs and the region's reliance on natural gas and building a more sustainable future."

The project supports the Met Council’s broader climate goals, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing use of renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency across our operations. It is a strong example of how customized energy efficiency projects can deliver results.

Blue Lake is one of the largest wastewater treatment facilities in Minnesota, treating roughly 27 million gallons of wastewater every day. In addition to environmental benefits, this project also delivers real value to Minnesotans by reducing emissions associated with customer use of energy. It is expected to save the Met Council approximately $160,000 annually in energy costs, reduce long-term operational expenses, and maximize the value of resources already being produced at the Blue Lake facility.

Recommending no change to local limits



In September, we completed our evaluation of the local limits for discharge to the sanitary sewer and are recommending no changes to the current limits. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is currently reviewing the evaluation and findings.

The evaluation, which we are required to complete every five years, indicated that further investigation is needed to identify chloride, copper, mercury, and phosphorus sources for specific water resource recovery facility collection systems, as well as conduct source identification work to find sources of aluminum, ammonia, chloride, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), phosphorus, and sulfate in the entire regional collection system.

Changes to the local limits have not been made since the 1996 evaluation, when five of the eight regulated parameter limits were lowered.

The local limits are currently found in the Waste Discharge Rules, Section 401, “Local Pretreatment Standards.” Companies that are also subject to EPA Categorical Limits are required to meet the most stringent of the two limits for each parameter.

MnTAP's industrial chloride reduction project

High levels of chloride negatively impact aquatic life in rivers and lakes in MN. It only takes one teaspoon of table salt to pollute five gallons of water above the chronic level of 230 milligrams per liter (mg/L). Chloride enters water bodies as runoff from winter maintenance, fertilizer, and dust suppression or in discharge from wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) and industrial facilities.

The Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) has a project to help industrial facilities across Minnesota reduce chloride use through two activities:

- **Site assessments:** MnTAP staff complete a site visit to identify and quantify opportunities to reduce chloride use.
- **Intern projects:** Companies host a MnTAP intern, who is focused on finding ways to reduce chloride use, for 3 months.

Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

If you are interested in learning more about the project, please contact Laura Sevcik at lsevcik@umn.edu.

PFAS updates

PFAS survey reminder

We are asking all permitted industrial users to please complete and submit the PFAS product survey if you haven't already done so.

- Met Council PFAS product survey (Excel)
- Instructions for completing the Met Council PFAS product survey (PDF)

Thank you to everyone that has submitted your survey. This data is helping to guide our source reduction work. Please see the published list of all PFAS-containing products reported in the surveys submitted. It contains nearly 450 unique PFAS products.

PFAS monitoring in the collection system

We continue to conduct PFAS monitoring in the collection systems of our water resource recovery facilities to help us learn more about influent PFAS loadings and potential sources. This summer we monitored the Metro system including residential only and commercial sewer lines to gather data from non-industrial sources. Results of this monitoring will be presented at next year's industrial customer workshop.

2027 Industrial User rates and fees adopted in August

The 2027 preliminary industrial user rates and fees presented at the liquid waste hauler and industrial customer workshops this spring, were adopted by the Metropolitan Council's Environment Committee in August. They are available on the Industrial Waste rates and fees webpage.

Open Channel News

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2026 Industrial User rates and fees

Permit fees (paid annually):

- $775 to $13,800 depending on permit status for Standard, Special, and Liquid Waste Hauler Permits
- $650 for PFAS-impacted Water Treatment Permits
- $500 for Sewer Cleaning Waste Hauler General Permits
- $550 for all other General Permits

Strength charges for wastewater discharged on site:

- $0.359 per excess pound of total suspended solids (TSS)
- $0.180 per excess pound of chemical oxygen demand (COD)

Production-based strength charge for microbreweries and brewpubs on General Permit:

- $1.13 per beer barrel

Full-cost recovery rates for treatment of industrial wastewater hauled to the Met Council disposal sites:

- $0.440 per excess pound of TSS
- $0.220 per excess pound of COD

Liquid Waste Hauler load charges:

- $12.74 per 1,000 gallons for Domestic Holding Tank wastes
- $67.27 per 1,000 gallons for Domestic Septage and Commercial wastes
- $86.20 per 1,000 gallons for Portable Toilet wastes
- $82.27 per 1,000 gallons for Out-of-Service Area Domestic wastes

Service fee for Out-of-Service Area loads:

- $15.00 per 1,000 gallons

Industrial Capacity Charge (ICC):



- $2.38 per 1,000 gallons
- $3.05 per 1,000 gallons Rural Center – East Bethel
- $4.49 per 1,000 gallons Rural Center – Elko New Market

Sewer Availability Charge (SAC): (paid to the local community for use of the metropolitan disposal system (MDS), city may include additional local charge)

- $2,485 per SAC unit (1 unit = 274 gallons per day)
- $3,185 per SAC unit Rural Center – East Bethel
- $4,685 per SAC unit Rural Center – Elko New Market

Temporary Capacity Charge (TCC): (paid directly to the Met Council for temporary use of the MDS)

- $1.25 per 1,000 gallons
- $1.60 per 1,000 gallons Rural Center – East Bethel
- $2.36 per 1,000 gallons Rural Center – Elko New Market

For more information, visit Industrial Waste Rates and Fees on the Met Council website.

Stay connected!



To make sure you receive important information regarding your permit, add the following emails to your address book: MCESIndustrialOnlineReporting@metc.state.mn.us and METC@public.govdelivery.com. *(GovDelivery is a news delivery system, it is not an active email account.)*

To update your contact information, please contact the Industrial Waste and Pollution Prevention staff assigned to your permit or email iwpp@metc.state.mn.us.