

## Hamilton Water Sewage Spills Communications Guideline Updated November 2024

### Introduction

This Communications Guideline has been prepared in response to events where sewage spills from City of Hamilton sewer infrastructure were discharged to the natural environment and identifies communications processes under four different scenarios.

The Communications Guideline is a tool to assist in keeping Council, Senior Leadership, the community, media, and other stakeholders informed in an open, transparent, and consistent manner. It is important to note that this is a working document to help guide staff in this process and to provide the community and council with an expectation of what will happen during an event. This guideline is for sewage spills from Hamilton Water infrastructure during dry weather where the sewer system isn't functioning as it was designed.

### Sewage Spills from Hamilton Water Infrastructure Webpage

Staff will create a map-based webpage where information about sewage spills originating from Hamilton Water infrastructure will be recorded and available as public information. This webpage will provide background information on Hamilton Water's sewer inspection programs, include a registry of all sewage spills originating from Hamilton Water's infrastructure during dry weather, and show each spill's location on an interactive map. Figure 1 below outlines the minimum information that will be included in the registry:

**Figure 1**

Date of Discovery	Location	Background / Cause	Corrective Actions	Date Remediation Complete	Estimated Spill Volume (if possible)	Estimated Duration of Spill	Approximate Cost of Repair

### Communications Process

If a potential sewage spill from Hamilton Water infrastructure is identified, staff will notify the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks of the potential spill through the Spills Action Centre. Staff will then investigate the situation further to confirm if there is a spill occurring from Hamilton Water infrastructure or a private cross-connection.

- If a spill is confirmed, staff will follow up with the Spills Action Centre with the appropriate information.
- If the investigation determines that a private sewer lateral cross-connection staff will follow the processes created under the sewer lateral cross-connection program.
- If the investigation confirms a sewage spill originating from Hamilton Water infrastructure, the communication protocols will be based on the relative magnitude of the spill.

Figure 2 outlines the various communication channels used in each scenario. The guidelines below are meant to be minimum levels of communication. It is recognized

that each situation may have unique factors that require increased communication levels.

**Figure 2**

Communication Channel	Person Responsible or Delegate	Spill Volume Scenario			
		A <50,000 litres	B >50,000 to 100 million litres	C 101 million litres to 500 million	D Over 500 million litres
Initial Notification to Spills Action Centre (SAC). Also responsible for follow-up communications (i.e., following the initial reporting to SAC)	Supervisor in control of the spill	x	x	x	x
Director of Hamilton Water, Director of Operations, Manager of Compliance and Regulations	Manager of the Section responsible for control of the spill	x	x	x	x
Public Health Services	Manager, Compliance & Regulations		x	x	x
Notification to the Local District Office of the MOE, prior to any public notifications by Hamilton Water (e.g., media, posting on City Website, etc.).	Manager, Compliance & Regulations		x	x	x
Ward Councillor (before notifying all of Council and after notifying MECP)	Director, Water and Wastewater Operations		x	x	x
Residents who are immediately impacted by the spill. (i.e. prolonged construction or increased traffic)	Manager of the Section responsible for control of the spill		x	x	x
Media Relations/Communications Team before submitting the webpage update and E-newsletter request	Senior Project Manager, Outreach and Education		x	x	x
General Manger of Public Works, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and City Manager via E-Mail followed by Mayor and all Council	Director, Hamilton Water			x	x
External Stakeholders	Director, Watershed Management				x
Corporate Communications Team (to trigger the following public communications related pieces)	Senior Project Manager, Outreach & Education	x	x	x	x
Post on city website (dedicated webpage)	Communications Division	x	x	x	x
City of Hamilton E- Newsletter (for subscribers)	Communications Division	x	x	x	x
Media Release	Communications Division			x	x
City of Hamilton social media	Communications Division			x	x

The following external stakeholders will be directly notified in Response Scenario D in Figure 2:

- Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan partners
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council
- Huron-Wendat Nation
- Mississauga's of the Credit First Nation
- Six Nations of the Grand River
- Joint Stewardship Board in the event of a discharge to Red Hill Creek
- Local Industry or impacted landowners in the area of outfalls to the environment
- The following Agencies in the event of a discharge to lands or waters under their jurisdiction:
  - Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority
  - Royal Botanical Gardens
  - Hamilton Conservation Authority
  - Halton Regional Conservation Authority
  - Niagara Regional Conservation Authority