



[Issue](#) | [Background](#) | [Findings](#) | [Conclusions](#) | [Recommendations](#) | [Responses](#) | [Attachments](#)

# **Summary of The San Mateo/Estero Municipal Improvement District Wastewater Treatment Plant**

## **A Work in Progress**

### **Issue**

Has the City of San Mateo implemented the recommendations in the consultant's 2004 assessment of the San Mateo/Estero Municipal Improvement District Wastewater Treatment Plant?

### **Summary**

The City of San Mateo contracted with MWH, a world-wide consulting firm, to analyze the operation and facilities of the wastewater treatment plant. After examining the plant, MWH in 2004 prepared a set of recommendations for improvement. The San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury finds that most of the recommendations of MWH were followed, but that the emergency preparedness plans and plant security procedures need improvement.



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## **A Work in Progress**

### **Issue**

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### **Background**

The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) operates under a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between the City of San Mateo and the Foster City Estero Municipal Improvement District (EMID). Foster City acquired an interest in the wastewater treatment plant to ensure adequate treatment capacity for Foster City in the future. San Mateo currently owns approximately 75% of the treatment plant and EMID owns approximately 25%.

The original JPA is dated June 1974, and has been subsequently amended to deal with expansion of the plant and use by each party.

San Mateo is designated as the "Lead Agency" as required by the Clean Water Grant Program. As Lead Agency, San Mateo administers the JPA by and through its departments and officers. The City of San Mateo Department of Public Works (SMDPW) is generally responsible for the day-to-day operation of the wastewater treatment plant. Foster City is not involved with the "nuts and bolts" of plant operation.

The City of San Mateo hired MWH to analyze and report on the operations and facilities of the WWTP. The consultant's report was issued in 2004 and included recommendations for operational and facility improvements.

## Investigation

The San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) has conducted an investigation to determine if the consultant's recommendations have been implemented, and also examined plant emergency preparedness plans. The Grand Jury interviewed City of San Mateo and Foster City personnel responsible for the wastewater treatment plant and visited the plant, where a construction project is currently underway. The Grand Jury reviewed a selection of documents, including Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The WWTP Emergency Response Plan and the Contingency Plan were evaluated using criteria developed and published by the prior (2005-2006) Grand Jury. (See Appendix A)

## Findings

The City of San Mateo has implemented or is in the process of implementing the following recommendations from the MWH report. The City:

- Has installed new hardware for the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system and is upgrading the software. Employee training on the new system is underway. The new system is capable of monitoring plant operations and performing trending analysis.
- Has rewritten 15 of 30 standard operating procedures (SOPs) and expects to complete the balance by the end of 2006. The plant operators are required to adhere to the SOPs.
- Is developing a formal plan to monitor and improve plant performance.
- Has recently updated the written job descriptions for each position.
- Is developing a plan to encourage plant operators to take additional training courses and to obtain higher ratings.
- Has reassigned responsibility for preventive maintenance; work that was formerly done by the maintenance staff is now done by the operating staff. SMDPW has implemented automated tracking of maintenance work orders, and the computer system will soon start generating preventative maintenance work orders.
- Has formalized shift-to-shift communication; shift supervisors meet for 20 minutes at shift change. Additionally, SMPWD has implemented monthly informational meetings which have considerably improved communication.
- Has digitized all relevant documents (e.g., monthly reports, lab results, SOPs, etc.) and made the reports available online.

- Will address operational responsibility for the Dale Avenue Pump Station after construction of the two new digesters is completed in Spring 2007.
- Has hired a consultant to address the 20-year plan for capital improvements; however, a replacement schedule for existing capital equipment does not yet exist. SMDPW is preparing a list of critical equipment.

The MWH report also recommended that plant security be improved. Specifically, the report recommended “*additional access controls and signage around the front gate of the WWTP in order to control access to the facility and assist visitors in finding the main office. Perimeter fencing should also be reviewed and repaired on a routine basis to minimize unauthorized access to the facility.*” SMDPW has not implemented this recommendation.

Other security issues noted by the Grand Jury are:

- The attitude of those responsible for the operation of the plant is “we don’t have a security problem, nothing has ever happened.”
- The main gate is normally open during the day and signs instruct visitors to check in at the office. The route to the office is tortuous and not well marked.
- The Grand Jury was told that plant security will be evaluated when the current construction projects are completed.
- SMDWP stated that closed circuit TV is one of the techniques that will be considered to improve perimeter security.
- The Grand Jury observed that two of the three gates in the perimeter fence are substantially compromised. There is a 10-inch gap below one gate and an 11-inch gap in the fencing at the other; a child or an adult could easily enter the plant at either location.
- The Grand Jury visited one other wastewater treatment plant in the County and found that facility to be far more secure than the San Mateo/EMID plant. To wit, in the other treatment plant:
  - The main entrance gate is kept closed. An intercom at the gate allows the visitor to contact the office, after which the gate may be opened remotely.
  - The perimeter fencing is secure and properly maintained.
  - The facility is protected by an alarm system at night.
  - Plant operators appreciate the need for a secure environment and appear to actively monitor the facility.

- The operators of this facility plan to add closed circuit TV surveillance to their SCADA system.

The Grand Jury evaluated the WWTP Emergency Response Plan and the Contingency Plan. For the purposes of this evaluation, credit was given if either of these plans addressed the required critical elements. The score awarded to the combined plans is 8 out of a possible 22. The evaluation criteria and the areas in which the plans are deficient are detailed in Appendices A and B.

## **Conclusions**

San Mateo DPW has adopted, implemented, or is in the process of implementing, many of the recommendations in the MWH report.

San Mateo DPW has not made plant security a high priority issue and significant deficiencies are evident. While the current construction project complicates the perimeter security problem, it does not lessen the need for improved security. The purpose of the fencing is to keep unauthorized persons from entering the facility. This is especially important during a construction project where persons could be injured on the property. The current state of disrepair of the perimeter fencing allows unauthorized access to the property which creates a potential danger to the public and liability exposure to the JPA.

The WWTP Emergency Response Plan is deficient. Each of the following sections of the plan needs improvement: Purpose and Scope, Staff Roles and Responsibilities, Evacuation Procedures and Post-Emergency Plans.

The Plan also fails to address the following five elements required in a comprehensive plan: SEMS/ICS Compliance, Decision Making Guidelines, Personnel Training Plan, Test & Update Training Plan and Plans for Coordinating with other Agencies.

## **Recommendations**

The Grand Jury recommends that the San Mateo City Council, the Foster City City Council, and their respective Joint Powers Authority that governs the waste water treatment facility:

1. Make plant security a high priority and educate the staff on the need for increased awareness of and attention to physical security.
2. Upgrade the physical security of the WWTP.
3. Create and implement a comprehensive and effective emergency response plan.

## **Appendix A**

### **Criteria for Evaluating Disaster Preparedness Plans**

The 2005-2006 Grand Jury Report titled “*Disaster Preparedness in SamTrans, Environmental Services, and Public Works*” explains the process and criteria developed to evaluate Disaster Preparedness Plans. These criteria are:

- **Purpose and Scope** Describes what the plan is designed to accomplish and who is responsible.
- **SEMS Compliance** Complies with SEMS requirements as outlined in the State Emergency Planning Guide for Local Government. (SEMS compliant plans are required to receive state and federal disaster relief funds.)
- **Staff Roles and Responsibilities** Describes the roles and responsibilities of each staff member.
- **Emergency Contacts and Phone Numbers** Describes the emergency staff chain of command and whom to call under what circumstances.
- **Guidelines for Decision Makers** Provides clear steps to follow in making decisions during an emergency.
- **Specific Emergency Procedures** Contains instructions covering a list of potential emergencies.
- **Evacuation and Shelter Plans** Contains instructions for evacuation and shelter during an emergency.
- **Personnel Training Plan** Defines plans for training personnel with specific topics and types of training.
- **Exercise and Update Plan** Describes the frequency of training exercises and how the results of those exercises are used to improve the plan.
- **Plans for Coordinating with other Agencies and Departments** Describes procedures for coordinating with other agencies during an emergency.
- **Post-Emergency Plans** Defines plans to deal with post-emergency issues and the return to normal operations.

## Appendix B Evaluation of the WWTP Emergency Response and Contingency Plan

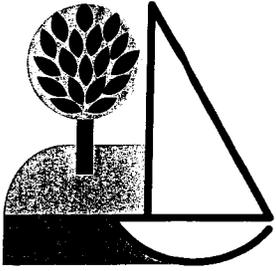
The Grand Jury has evaluated the WWTP Emergency Response Plan and Contingency Plan. For the purposes of this evaluation, credit is given if either of these Plans addressed the required critical elements. The chart below shows the results of this evaluation.

A score of 0 indicates that an element is not included in the plan.

A score of 1 indicates that the treatment of an element is incomplete or unclear.

A score of 2 is given if the treatment of an element is complete and clear.

Criteria	San Mateo/EMID WWTP
Purpose & Scope	1
SEMS/ICS Compliant	0
Staff Roles & Responsibilities	1
Emergency Contacts & Phone Numbers	2
Guidelines for Decision Making	0
Specific Emergency Procedures	2
Evacuation Procedures	1
Personnel Training Plan	0
Test & Update Training Plan	0
Plans for Coordinating with other Agencies	0
Post-Emergency Plans	1
<b>Score</b>	<b>8</b>



# *City of Foster City*

## **ESTERO MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

610 FOSTER CITY BOULEVARD  
FOSTER CITY, CA 94404-2222  
(650) 286-3200  
FAX (650) 574-3483

January 3, 2007

Honorable John L. Grandsaert  
Judge of the Superior Court  
Hall of Justice  
400 County Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Subject: San Mateo/Estero Municipal Improvement District Wastewater Treatment Plant – A  
Work in Progress Report

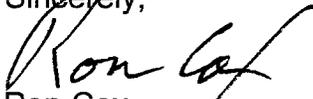
Dear Judge Grandsaert:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above referenced Grand Jury Report filed on October 12, 2006. The City of San Mateo is the lead agency for the Operation and Maintenance of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Estero Municipal Improvement District (EMID) is an owner/partner through a Joint Powers Agreement.

EMID has received the findings of the Grand Jury and met with key staff from San Mateo to discuss the Grand Jury Report. The District has reviewed the letter response from the City of San Mateo, as approved by their Council at their January 2, 2007 City Council Meeting and EMID concurs with the Responses and Recommendations.

The District appreciates the efforts the Grand Jury has taken and we are confident that the recommendations made by the Grand Jury will bring about positive change.

Sincerely,

  
Ron Cox  
President  
Board of Directors

Cc: EMID Board of Director/City Council of Foster City  
City Council of City of San Mateo  
Jim Hardy, City Manager, City of Foster City  
Ray Towne, Public Works Director, City of Foster City  
Arne Croce, City Manager, City of San Mateo  
Larry Patterson, Public Works Director, City of San Mateo  
Darla Reams, Assistant Public Works Director, City of San Mateo



January 2, 2007

Hon. John L. Grandsaert  
Judge of the Superior Court  
Hall of Justice  
400 County Center; 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Redwood City, CA 94063-1655

Re: ***2006-2007 Grand Jury Report; San Mateo/EMID Wastewater Treatment Plant – A Work in Progress***

Dear Judge Grandsaert:

On October 12, 2006, the San Mateo Grand Jury filed a report evaluating whether the City of San Mateo had implemented the recommendations included in a December 2004 Assessment of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) prepared by MWH. A copy of the Grand Jury report was sent to the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the City Councils for the Cities of San Mateo and Foster City.

The submittal letter directs the Joint Powers Authority to consider the report, to state its agreement or disagreement with the Grand Jury's findings, and to state its intentions with respect to the Grand Jury's recommendations. As Lead Agency for the JPA the City of San Mateo is responsible to act for the Agency and will therefore submit this response. Working with staff the City Council has reviewed and considered the Grand Jury's report. This letter has been presented to the San Mateo City Council, and the City Council has authorized me as Mayor to sign and submit it as the response to the Grand Jury's report.

### **Grand Jury's Findings and Conclusions**

1. The City of San Mateo has implemented or is in the process of implementing the following recommendations from the MWH report.
  - Upgrades to the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system (SCADA)
  - Has rewritten 15 of 30 Standard Operating Procedures and expects to complete the balance by the end of 2006
  - Is developing a formal plan to monitor and improve plant performance
  - Has recently updated the written job descriptions for each position
  - Is developing a plan to encourage plant operators to take additional training courses and to obtain higher ratings
  - Has reassigned responsibility for preventative maintenance to operations staff. The plant has also implemented automatic tracing of maintenance work orders, and the computer system will soon be generating preventative maintenance work orders.

- Has formalized shift-to-shift communication and has implemented monthly informational meetings which have improved communication.
  - Has digitized all relevant documents and made the reports available on-line.
  - Will address operational responsibility for the Dale Avenue Pump Station after the construction project is complete, and
  - Is in the process of addressing the 20 year plan for capital improvements and a replacement schedule for existing capital equipment.
2. The City of San Mateo has not implemented the following MWH security recommendations:
- Provide additional access controls and signage around the front gate of the WWTP to control access to the facility and assist visitors in finding the main office, and
  - Perimeter fencing should also be reviewed and repaired on a routine basis to minimize unauthorized access to the facility.
3. Other Security findings noted by the Grand Jury are:
- The attitude of those responsible for the operation of the plant is “we don’t have a security problem, nothing has ever happened”
  - The main gate is normally open during the day and signs instruct visitors to check in at the office. The route to the office is tortuous and not well marked, and
  - Two of the three gates in the perimeter fence are substantially compromised. There is a 10-inch gap below one gate and an 11-inch gap in the fencing at the other.
4. The WWTP Emergency Response Plan does not include all of the elements necessary to be an adequate Disaster Preparedness Plan. Each of the following sections of the plan needs improvement: Purpose and Scope, Staff Roles and Responsibilities, Evacuation Procedures and Post-Emergency Plans. In addition the plan fails to address the following five elements required in a comprehensive plan: SEMS/ICS compliance, Decision Making Guidelines, Personnel Training Plan, Test and Update Training Plan and Plans for Coordinating with other Agencies.

### **CITY OF SAN MATEO AND JPA RESPONSES TO THE GRAND JURY’S RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City agrees with the above Grand Jury findings.

In general the Grand Jury found that the City of San Mateo, as the lead agency for the Wastewater Treatment JPA, has acted prudently both in obtaining an outside objective review of operations and maintenance practices and by addressing areas identified for improvement. Our intended response to the three areas, identified by the Grand Jury as needing attention is summarized below. As noted in the following sections our response to each of the remaining issues is scheduled for completion within FY 06-07

**1. Make the WWTP security a high priority and educate the staff on the need for increased awareness of and attention to physical security.**

In response to the Grand Jury report the WWTP is incorporating Security Awareness Training into the WWTP Safety Program. On November 8, 2006 the WWTP Safety Committee was tasked with finding a training module for security awareness training. The committee will obtain a training program and incorporate it into the existing annual training schedule or make recommendations for the training of all staff by a training consultant. The San Mateo Police Department will be looked to as a key resource in development of the security awareness program. The work program targets the end of the third quarter 2006/07 as the date by which employee training will be accomplished.

Also on November 8, 2006 Plant operations staff was directed to include security checks when making plant rounds and document findings in the daily report. The security checks include visual inspection of the fence and gates, observance of parking areas for unknown vehicles, visual inspection of all unoccupied structures and inspection of security lighting. These security checks will be an ongoing part of plant operations duties and take place at a minimum once per 12 hour shift.

**2. Upgrade the physical security of the WWTP.**

In response to the Grand Jury report the WWTP has completed an evaluation of the physical security of the facility. Particular attention was paid to the perimeter fence and repairs and/or modifications necessary to keep unauthorized persons from entering the facility. The following repairs/modifications have been identified:

- Weld plates to the bottom of the two existing fences to reduce the clearance from the pavement to three inches.
- Provide a security guard at the front gate of the WWTP during the hours of the day that the front gate is open. The gate will be open during construction working hours to facilitate the project through the end of 2007. The automatic gate will remain closed during evening hours.
- Once the project is complete the automatic front gate will remain in the closed position at all times. Plant entry will be regulated through the use of a key pad code and automatic openers issued to plant personnel. Visitors to the facility will be provided a phone number at the plant entry to contact plant operations to request permission to enter the facility.
- Internal signage directing visitors to the administration office will be upgraded.

The repair of the two existing gates, upgrading of the directional signage and entering into a contract with a security company to provide guard services will take place no later than January 31, 2007.

**3. Create and implement a comprehensive and effective emergency response plan.**

The WWTP Contingency Plan and Emergency Response Plan were revised in June of 2005 to bring them into compliance with the WWTP Discharge (NPDES) permit. The plans however do not include all of the elements required in a comprehensive plan as described in the "Disaster Preparedness in San Trans, Environmental Services, and Public Works" Report prepared by the 2005-2006 Grand Jury. The WWTP will work with representatives of the Fire Department/OES to develop a SEMS Compliant Disaster Preparedness Plan. The Plan will incorporate the 11 critical elements required in a comprehensive plan. These elements include: Purpose and Scope, SEMS Compliance, Staff Roles and Responsibilities, Emergency Contacts and Phone Numbers, Guidelines for Decision Makers, Specific Emergency Procedures, Evacuation and Shelter Plans, Personnel Training Plan, Exercise and Update Plan, Plan for Coordinating with other Agencies and Departments, and Post-Emergency Plans.

According to the present work plan The City will complete a Draft Disaster Preparedness Plan for the WWTP by the end of the fourth quarter of the 2006-2007 fiscal-year. It is anticipated that approval of the plan and employee training will take place during the first and second quarters of the 2007-2008 fiscal-year.

**CONCLUSION**

On behalf of the City of San Mateo, I would like to thank the San Mateo Grand Jury for their service to the residents of our City. Their objective review of our Wastewater Treatment Plant and its operating and maintenance practices has been very helpful. We are taking the Grand Jury's recommendations very seriously and will be expeditious in our follow-up actions.

Sincerely,

Mayor



c: City of Foster City, City Council



January 2, 2007

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