

## **WASTEWATER COLLECTION UTILITY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN/SAMPLES**

In FY 2026, the communications strategy for the Wastewater Collection Utility will address the following primary areas: recently implemented cost containment measures, cost drivers for rate changes including increasing wastewater treatment costs, maintenance and operations related to safety, reserve balances, and how these necessary activities impact the rates this year. Communication about wastewater rate adjustments will highlight the important infrastructure upgrades that are occurring at the Regional Water Quality Control Plant (RWQCP) as well as capital improvement projects (CIP) to improve our Wastewater Collection Utility services. Financial reserves are also below minimum guidelines due to higher capital improvement program costs, higher operating expenses, lower revenue than forecasted, and higher transfers out to capital projects. Some projects will be deferred as the fund increases revenues to a sustainable level.

The City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) communication methods include use of the utilities website, utility bill inserts, messaging on utility bills, MyCPAU online account management platform, email newsletters, print and digital ads in local publications, social media, and community messaging platforms. Staff update the utilities webpages with information on the progress of wastewater projects to keep customers apprised of the status and accomplishments of capital improvement projects. Customers can find project schedules, maps, overview of the work being done, and project manager contact information at [cityofpaloalto.org/utilityprojects](https://cityofpaloalto.org/utilityprojects).

An important communications topic for the Wastewater Collection Utility is avoiding sewer back-ups due to FOG (fats, oil and grease), trash and other hazardous materials being dumped down drains and toilets. These items can clog sewer lines, cause sewer overflows, and pollute San Francisco Bay, and create a health and safety risk to humans. Safety topics are emphasized year-round. Staff continue to educate customers about the utility's gas-sewer line cross-bore inspection program, including the importance of calling 811 before digging and contacting CPAU prior to clearing sewer lines in the event of a sewer back-up.

While print materials and webpages feature prominently, CPAU is increasing the outreach emphasis on more direct communication with customers, including through use of social media, email newsletters, digital ads and videos. Staff attend community outreach events, safety and emergency preparedness fairs, business and neighborhood meetings. CPAU continually seeks out new opportunities to engage with the public to spread awareness about important safety topics and inform the community about project improvements such as at the RWQCP.

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## Toilets Aren't Trash Cans!



**Diapers and Wipes**  
(excluding baby wipes)



**Menstrual Products**



**Dental Floss**

Do not flush hair, contact lenses, cotton pads or swabs, medication, cat litter, toilet roll tubes, cigarettes, cleaning chemicals, paints & pesticides; fats, oils, grease (FOG), razors, or anything else down the toilet. Flushing items other than human waste and toilet paper can cause sewer backups into homes and streets, and pollution into creeks and the San Francisco Bay.

**ONLY** flush the  
Three P's: Poop, Pee,  
and Toilet Paper!

Visit [cleanbay.org](http://cleanbay.org) or  
call 650.329.2122 for  
more information.



Individuals with disabilities who require accommodations to access City facilities, services or programs, or who would like information on the City's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, may contact the City's ADA Coordinator at (650) 329-2550 (voice) or email [ada@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:ada@cityofpaloalto.org).



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## NOTICE: Sewer Use and Stormwater Ordinance Updates

The City of Palo Alto invites public comment on proposed updates to its Sewer Use and Stormwater Ordinances (Palo Alto Municipal Code, Chapters 16.09 and 16.11). These updates will align the ordinance with new state regulations and permit requirements and will include administrative revisions to organize the content into four separate chapters: Sewer Use, Stormwater, Hauled Liquid Waste (Septic Hauler), and Fats, Oils, & Grease (FOG). These Ordinance provisions are administered by the City of Palo Alto Public Works-Watershed Protection which oversees water pollution prevention services.

Highlights of Ordinance revisions are summarized below:



### Sewer Use Ordinance

- Updates apply primarily to businesses and permitted facilities.
- Residents with backyard swimming pools may be impacted by ordinance changes related to pool draining permit requirements.



### Stormwater Ordinance

- Updates include new pollution prevention practices that will impact commercial and industrial businesses and development projects.



### Hauled Liquid Waste (Septic Hauler) Ordinance

- This new municipal code chapter applies to haulers of septic wastes (such as sewage collected from a septic tank, cesspool, or chemical toilet) that discharge at the Regional Water Quality Control Plant. Changes capture and codify current City practices.



### Fats, Oils, and Grease Ordinance

- Updates apply to restaurants and other food facilities such as hotels, cafeterias, cafes, and religious institutions, and include requirements to manage grease-related waste.

Ordinance revisions, opportunity to comment,  
and public meeting dates are available at  
[cityofpaloalto.org/SewerStormOrdinanceUpdate](http://cityofpaloalto.org/SewerStormOrdinanceUpdate)

Email [cleanbay@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:cleanbay@cityofpaloalto.org), or call 650.329.2122 for more information.

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## IT'S ALMOST POOL SEASON!



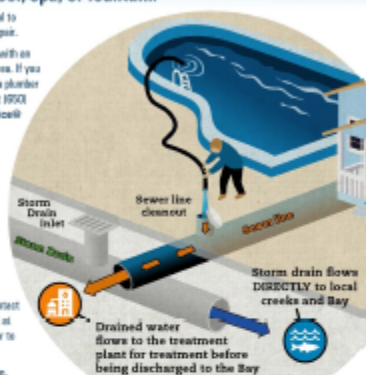
Warm weather is ahead, which means pool season is around the corner! If you need to drain your pool, spa, or fountain, **ONLY** drain to your sanitary sewer line cleanout. Draining to the street, sidewalk, or lawn could lead to copper, chlorine, and other chemicals ending up in creeks and the Bay where it can harm wildlife.

### When draining your pool, spa, or fountain:

- To conserve water, only drain your pool to stabilize water hardness or make a repair.
- Look for your sewer cleanout marked with an "S," usually located in a landscaped area. If you need help locating your cleanout, call a plumber or contact City of Palo Alto Utilities at (650) 329-2161 or [UtilitiesCustomerService@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:UtilitiesCustomerService@cityofpaloalto.org).
- Use a garden hose to drain your pool, spa, or fountain into the cleanout.
- Clean filter with a hose and in an area that ensures no water enters any storm drains.
- To avoid sewer overflows, don't drain pools on rainy days and keep the flow rate slow, around 30 gallons per minute.

For pools larger than 20,000 gallons, contact the Regional Water Quality Control Plant at [Permittees@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Permittees@cityofpaloalto.org) prior to draining to avoid a sewer backup.

Visit [cleanbay.org](http://cleanbay.org) for more information.



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## You're Making a Splash!

Your monthly Stormwater Management Fee funds storm drain system upgrades, new projects, maintenance, flood protection, litter reduction, rebates, and water quality programs.



### Creek Camera Installed on the Pope/Chaucer Bridge, 2023

Residents can view real-time photos of San Francisco Creek by visiting [cityofpaloalto.org/creekmonitor](http://cityofpaloalto.org/creekmonitor).



### East Meadow System Upgrades, 2024

The storm drain on East Meadow Drive is being updated to increase capacity.



### Citywide Storm Drainage System Replacements and Rehabilitation, 2019-2024

This project continues to replace broken or cracked storm drain lines, upsize pipes to a 12-inch minimum, and install pipe liners. Over 2,500 ft of pipe has been replaced or upsized, 2,400 ft of pipe has been lined, and 50 structures (manholes or catch basins) have been replaced.



### East Meadow Circle Connection to Adobe Creek Pump Station, 2024

The project creates a bypass for channel overflow from Barron Creek to the Adobe Creek Pump Station. The bypass will reduce flooding that occurs at East Meadow Circle and divert storm drain runoff to Adobe Creek.

Visit [cityofpaloalto.org/stormwaterfee](http://cityofpaloalto.org/stormwaterfee)

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