Bureau of Sanitation Wet Weather Preparedness and Response – FY 2013/04

Introduction

Since the early 1990's, the Bureau of Sanitation has prepared an annual wet weather preparedness and operation plan for the wet weather season. The plan reviews, updates and documents the Bureau's operational procedures during the wet weather season. The Bureau's efforts are to prepare, plan and coordinate the operation of the Bureau's facilities in order to efficiently respond and effectively minimize and mitigate the impacts of the anticipated wet weather events.

For the 2013-2014 wet weather season, the Bureau has reviewed and updated its wet weather preparedness and operation plan. The main focus of the plan is to protect the public health and safety, ensure the readiness and operation of our facilities including primary and backup components, maximize and optimize the use of our facilities, maintain stable operations, and minimize, monitor, and coordinate any adverse impacts on the public and the environment due to emergencies, unavoidable sewage overflows and street flooding.

Preparation

Wastewater System

There are several key aspects of the plan. The Bureau operates and maintains 6,700 miles of sewer, 47 pumping and four wastewater treatment plants. The pumping plants are all inspected, and backup equipment is set up for immediate use at all of the critical pump plants. The larger, most critical plants have dedicated standby emergency generators and redundant equipment to ensure no spills will occur.

Each of the local collection system yards maintains equipment and material that can be sent to problem areas as crews are dispatched. The main collection system yard has the large pieces of equipment and additional staff that can be used to supplement the local yard crews and equipment.

Storm Drains

There is an extensive storm drain system for the Los Angeles region. The City owns only a portion of the City/County/Federal flood control system.

The Bureau inspects and cleans 45,000 catch basins, 102 debris basins, and 1,260 miles of storm drains annually in preparation for the rainy season. Key facilities are inspected more frequently, including during all storm events.

In addition, 10 stormwater pump plants are operated in low-lying areas that are prone to flooding. These pump plants need to operate in dry as well as wet weather.

Sand Bag Availability

The Bureau of Street Services has sand bags available for the public to pick up at each of its yards. The City Fire Department also has sandbags available at each of its fire stations, plus sand is available at designated fire stations. The Fire Department also has a series of brochures available on how to fill, place and maintain sand bags and other wet weather protection. These brochures are available at their stations as well as on their website.

Wet Weather Prediction

Bureau staff monitors the weather reports issued by the NWS and local media throughout the year. The Bureau issues a wet weather alert putting all our facilities on alert in anticipation of the upcoming storm(s). **All our facilities and staff are ready and prepared for this anticipated storm.**

The Bureau also works with the Public Affairs Office (PAO) to have the PAO issue a press release to have the public assist by reminding them not to water their yards during and after the storm to help minimize the runoff and conserve water.

Storm Event Duties

Extra staff is placed on standby and/or mobilized to operate Bureau facilities in a rain storm. Crews patrol the City to monitor the sewer system and storm drain system and respond to and mitigate any problems, including unavoidable overflows and localized street flooding. Localized street flooding may occur in low-lying areas especially during high intensity storms. It should be noted that the street system is part of the drainage system for runoff since City storm drains are only designed to handle a 10-year storm. Crews are also dispatched based on receiving calls from citizens and other City agencies.

Under the wet weather operational mode, the upstream wastewater treatment plants will maximize their intake to minimize the impact of the storm on the sewer system. If the storms are extremely severe, the wastewater collection system used to experience some overflows along the North Outfall Sewer in South Los Angeles, in Glassell Park, Eagle Rock and Highland Park areas. These sewers have been relieved by a number of sewer projects including the East Central Interceptor Sewer, the Northeast Interceptor Sewer Phase I, and the Eagle Rock Interceptor Sewer. Every effort will be made to prevent and contain any overflows that might occur in the event of an extreme storm condition.

Post-Storm Event Activities

Crews clean up any spill areas, and the Bureau analyzes what happened at these areas. The bureau sits down with the Bureau of Engineering to allocate resources to see what capital improvement projects are needed to mitigate the flooding areas.