

Consent Decree Wastewater Improvements



Houston Public Works is upgrading the city's aging wastewater system in compliance with the EPA's Consent Decree. This is a 15-year commitment, and we're currently in Year 5, focused on improving service and protecting our community and environment.

KEY INITIATIVES

Targeted Infrastructure Improvements

We are upgrading critical infrastructure across the city—including wastewater treatment plants, pump stations, force mains, and gravity sewers. As of now, 75% of these early action projects are complete.

Ongoing Maintenance

We are conducting system-wide inspections and cleanings to maintain the wastewater system. This work, which is on track or ahead of schedule, includes:

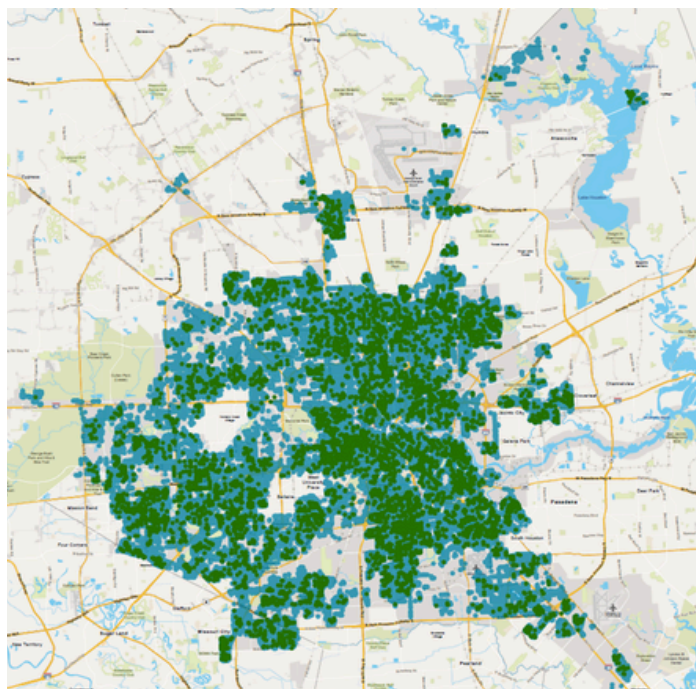
- Cleaning all gravity sewers every 10 years (a total of 5,791 miles of pipes).
- Completing preventive sewer cleaning in areas with frequent SSOs: 275 miles per year (Inspect 82.5 miles/year).
- Completing performance evaluations on all wastewater treatment plants every 5 years.

MAP OF CLEANED AND REMEDIATED SEWER MAINS

This map shows where Houston Public Works has cleaned and remediated sewer mains across the city. We're taking a citywide approach to reduce overflows and keep the system working reliably for all residents.

KEY

- Remediated Gravity Sewer Main
- Cleaned Gravity Sewer Main



Community Education

Through our "Protect Our Pipes" campaign, we are engaging the public on how to help prevent blockages by properly disposing of fats, oils, grease, and wipes—items that are the leading causes of sanitary sewer overflows in Houston.

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Houston Public Works has already invested more than \$1 billion in Consent Decree-related projects, with a focus on upgrading infrastructure in communities with aging systems and a history of frequent overflows.

THE CHALLENGE:



Houston's wastewater system is one of the largest and most complex in the country, covering 589 square miles. Maintaining and upgrading this aging infrastructure is a major effort that requires time, funding, and coordination.



The estimated cost of Consent Decree work has grown from \$6 billion to \$9 billion, driven by inflation, supply chain issues, and the scale of the system.



70% of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) in Houston are caused by grease blockages. When fats, oils, and grease are poured down the drain, they solidify and clog pipes, leading to overflows.



SSOs from defects in main sewer lines are decreasing, but overflows from city-owned lateral lines are increasing—often caused by grease and wipes from homes and businesses.



Houston Public Works remains committed to improving system reliability and protecting public health, through smarter technology, stronger maintenance, and community partnership.

PREVENTING SSOs

The most effective way to reduce SSOs is to keep fats, oils, grease, and wipes out of the sewer system.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Never pour grease down the drain. Let it cool, then toss it in the trash.
- Only flush the 3 Ps: pee, poo, and toilet paper.
- Don't flush wipes—even if labeled "flushable."
- Share this message with friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED

Visit www.ProtectOurPipes.org for tips and resources you can use and share in your community.