



Maine Department of Environmental Protection

Bureau of Land & Water Quality

O&M Newsletter

April 2008

A monthly newsletter for wastewater discharge licensees, treatment facility operators, and associated persons

Index

EPA'S Energy Star Program	Page 1
Discharge Fee System	Page 2
DMR QA Study 28	Page 4



EPA's Energy Star Program Offers Tools for Drinking Water and Wastewater Facilities

America's drinking water and wastewater facilities can now save energy and reduce their carbon footprint with expanded tools available from EPA's Energy Star program. Enhancements to Portfolio Manager, the Agency's popular energy tracking tool for commercial facilities, allow water utilities to track energy use and associated carbon emissions, set targets for investment priorities, and verify efficiency improvements.

Water and wastewater facilities are energy intensive, accounting for more than one-third of municipal energy use. Improving the energy efficiency of America's drinking water and wastewater systems by 10 percent would save more than 5 billion kilowatt-hours each year, representing a cost savings of about \$400 million annually.

Drinking water and wastewater systems spend about \$4 billion a year on energy to pump, treat, deliver, collect, and clean water at the 52,000 community drinking water and 16,500 wastewater facilities in the United States. Through Energy Star, EPA provides a proven energy management strategy and no-cost tools for public and private organizations to save energy and money, as well as demonstrate environmental leadership.

For more information on Energy Star and Portfolio Manager for drinking water systems and wastewater plants, please visit:

<http://www.energystar.gov/waterwastewater>.

To access online training sessions visit:

<https://energystar.webex.com>

Other activities that explore the nexus between water and energy are described at:

http://www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/bettermanagement_energy.html.

State and local officials interested in additional information about developing and implementing cost-effective clean energy and environmental strategies that help further environmental and clean energy goals and achieve public health and economic benefits may visit: <http://epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-programs/state-and-local/index.html>

*Submitted by
Steve McLaughlin*



More Changes to Annual Waste Discharge Permit Fee System

As you may recall from the Annual License Fee Update article in the June 2007 issue of the O&M News, the first and second quarter bills for 2007 were significantly delayed because of changes to the computer systems for recording and tracking compliance data. Most of the data transfer problems from the new EFIS to PCS have been corrected, but a few lingering issues may still cause some trouble during 2008. The computer system problems did not delay the third and fourth quarter bills, but other changes did.

A quick reminder on billing – we do not send all bills out at once, we divided the total list of licensees into quarterly groups. Sometime during or at least close to the end of each quarter, we send bills to one of the quarterly groups. So, each facility gets an original bill once per year at roughly the same time of year. If the bill is not paid promptly, the unpaid account may generate a past due statement at the end of each month that

the bill remains unpaid, but see the discussion about interest charges, below.

There were two other changes during 2007 that affected the timing or other aspects of the NPDES billing process. The state changed its accounting system from MFASIS to AdvantageME. Our billing program could not transfer data directly to either MFASIS or to AdvantageME, so a new “Common Billing Interface” was constructed for NPDES to send the waste discharge fee information directly to Advantage in order to generate invoices and statements. Development and testing the new interface delayed both the third and fourth quarter bills in 2007.

The last change in 2007 was probably the most significant in how we deal with bill accounts. The Legislature authorized DEP to assess interest on overdue fees, beginning on September 20, 2007. The change in the law can be found in Title 38 MRS section 353, where a new subsection 9 was added, which reads:

“Finance charges. In addition to other remedies specifically authorized in the Title, the department shall charge interest at a rate of 15% per annum and may pursue enforcement, including, but not limited to, penalties pursuant to section 349 and suspension or revocation pursuant to section 341-D, subsection 3 for the failure of a licensee to pay any portion of licensing fees owed by the date due.”

The Department decided not to impose this new provision retroactively, so the interest assessments only apply to bills that were originally issued after September 20, 2007. Also, the interest is applied only to the principal, not compounded on previously assessed interest.

The AdvantageME accounting system places constraints on how we put the interest charges into practice. Aside from exceptional circumstances, the original annual wastewater bills will always be issued during the first full week of a month during the appropriate quarter. The due date will be set for 30 days after the issuance date. For example, a bill issued on October 3 would have a due date of November 2. The Advantage system closes the books monthly, so interest will be assessed on the closest possible date to the 25th of every month. Because of weekends and holidays, the closing date will, on rare occasions, be as late as the 30th. If your account balance is at zero by the time the books are closed for a given month, no further interest will be assessed. Therefore, you actually have around 55 days from original issuance to pay the bill amount without accruing any interest. For each month that the account remains unpaid after that, another increment of interest on the principal will accrue. Near the bottom of the statement, the note says that interest is calculated at 1.25% per month. I'm not sure what the program's actual calculation is, but the interest is actually calculated based on the number of days since the last critical date – either the due date or the last date that interest was charged. I find that the simplest way to confirm the interest amount is to divide the annual rate (as a

fraction, i.e. 0.15) by 365 days, multiply by the principal amount to give a daily dollar amount, and then multiply that number by the total number of days that interest is charged.

The new accounting system replaced the old invoice and statement with new ones. The licensees that were billed for the third and fourth quarters in 2007 have seen the new invoice and statement format. When the first and second quarter bills are sent out in 2008, the rest of you will see the new format. The new bill format should have been more user-friendly - some information that would be very helpful for understanding the status of your account is not presented. For instance, when interest has been assessed in previous months, the bill does not show a full breakdown of charges. Only the total owed is shown. You must still have the original invoice and any later statement that showed a new interest charge to be able to confirm that the total amount is correct and what charges are involved in the total. We are trying to have improvements made in the invoices and statements to better serve you.

Phil Garwood

DMR-QA STUDY 28

Just a short note for those wastewater treatment facilities that have been participating in the annual EPA laboratory quality assurance studies. The new DMR-QA study begins earlier this year. You should have received your 2008 booklets by now as they have been mailed. E-mail your verification to EPA when the booklet arrives at your plant. This should be done by April 18, 2008. This year's study begins on May

1st. Please order your Proficiency Testing (PT) samples by May 1st this year. You will still have until August 29th to do the DMR-QA test analyses and submit your un-graded data packages to each PT Provider lab involved.

See page 8 in your booklet for the Analyte Checklist. If an analyte is on both your MEPDES permit and the Analyte Checklist, you are required to perform quality assurance testing on that parameter for DMR-QA purposes.

See page 4 “Checklist and Schedule for DMR-QA Study 28”. Under the August 29, 2008 Deadline, see the part about mailing the original data package to the state coordinator. As in the past, my policy on receiving the un-graded data package is simple. Please do not mail me any un-graded data packages. I also don’t need any copies of the Provider-graded test results from the permittees. I’ll get them from the PT provider labs by October 24, 2008. You would only be duplicating what already happens automatically.

This year an online version of the NPDES Permittee Data Report Form is available as referenced on page 2 of the booklet letter. You are encouraged to fill it out onscreen. You may then print it out and sign it. The web address is in the letter.

Good luck with the analysis of the DMR-QA unknown samples this summer. Please report your results on-line to your provider lab before the August 29, 2008 deadline or they will be considered invalid! I advise you to do this in June or July, if possible. This eliminates the largest cause of failing the DMR-QA Study. Do it early before you get too busy and forget about it.

Ken Jones
State DMR-QA Coordinator
(207) 287-4869

