

MMIA RISK MANAGEMENT BULLETIN

Sewer System Lift Stations

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A wastewater lift station is a pumping system that moves wastewater from a lower elevation to a higher elevation within the sewer system network of piping. Lift stations are an integral part of the sewer management operation. Without them, the flows stop, the backup begins, and the only thing flowing is the financial resources to address the mess left behind.

When business and residential community members discard dirty water and flush toilets into sewer pipes, they expect to never see those contents again. If a lift station malfunctions in some way, those discarded fluids begin backing up into homes and businesses until the lift station is placed back in service. Keeping a lift station functioning correctly is crucial to the health and safety of the community members, their homes and businesses, and the Municipality's reputation. The MMIA has managed several claims associated with lift station breakdowns over the years. Below is a summary of an event that occurred in recent years involving one lift station and the impact on several homes.

A real world example

Incident:

A lift station stopped working due to a dead short in the electrical circuit for that lift station. All electrical functions at the lift station were disabled, including the alarms systems. Sewer contents continue to back up until the lift station is placed back in service.

Outcome:

In this example, 6 residents were affected by the sewer backup for a total cost of **\$106,000** in damages!
The most expensive of the 6 claims was for **\$43,000** in damages!

Common reasons for lift station breakdown

- * Power surge from electrical storm
- * Blown Fuses
- * Part failure
- * Catastrophic pump failure
- * Miscellaneous malfunction of lift station equipment

Final Thoughts

- Lack of or inadequate alarm notification to municipality personnel when there is no power being supplied to the lift station.
- Many of the Sewer System related claims the MMIA has managed in recent years were due to the lack of a functioning battery backup for the lift station alarm system.
- Alarm system functionality, when electrical power to the station had been disrupted, is crucial in order to communicate lift station emergencies.



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- As communities grow in Montana, sewer system expansion is inevitable, as are the likelihood of our Member-Owner's resources being called into action. Now is the time to evaluate existing alarm systems to facilitate reliable notification of lift station concerns so that response times can be more effective.

Website: MMIA.net/RiskManagement/CAP

E-mail: riskmgmt@mmia.net

Phone: 800-635-3089

Remember... it's your money!!

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