Joint Meeting of Essex & Union Counties
500 South First Street □ Elizabeth □ NJ 07202

Understanding Wastewater Treatment Odors and Public Health

Dear Community Members,

We understand that odors can sometimes be noticed in areas near our facility, and we would like to explain why these odors occur and what they mean for the public health and the environment.

Wastewater treatment plants perform an important public service by cleaning the water that leaves our homes, businesses, schools, and industries before it is safely returned to the environment. To do this, treatment plants rely on naturally occurring microorganisms—like those found in nature—to break down and remove waste from the water.

As these microorganisms do their work, they can produce gases that have noticeable odors. Some of the most common odors are often described as having an earthy, musty, sulfur, or "rotten egg" smell. While these odors may not be pleasant, they are a normal part of the wastewater treatment process and are commonly associated with facilities throughout the country.

Under normal operating conditions, wastewater treatment odors do not pose a threat to public health or the environment. In New Jersey, wastewater treatment facilities are subject to strict environmental regulations and are continuously monitored by the New Jersey Department of Envirnmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to ensure they operate safely and effectively.

Weather conditions can play a significant role in when and where odors are noticed. Wind direction, temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, and even tidal conditions can affect how odors travel. As a result, an odor may occasionally be detected in one area on a particular day and not be noticeable at all the next day, even when facility operations remain unchanged.

The Joint Meeting staff works around the clock to operate and maintain the facility, monitor treatment processes, and minimize odor impacts whenever possible. When odor concerns are reported, we investigate plant operations, weather conditions, and other factors to better understand what may have contributed to the presence of the odor and then take measures to address the issue.

If you experience an odor concern, we encourage you to call (908-913-1000) and to provide as much information as possible, including:

- **Date and time the odor was noticed**
- **Exact location or address**
- **Description of the odor**
- **Weather conditions, if known**
- **How long the odor lasted**

This information helps us compare reports with facility operating data and weather conditions, allowing us to conduct a more thorough investigation.

We take all odor reports seriously and appreciate the community's assistance in helping us identify and address concerns. Our commitment remains the same: protecting public health, protecting the environment, and providing reliable wastewater treatment services for the communities we serve.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

Sincerely,
Mr. Francis J. Bonaccorso
Superintendent
L.O. S4,C3,T3,CET