

Authority Times

News and Information for Customers
of the Borough of Conshohocken Authority

Volume XII Issue 4
Spring 2026

BCA Takes In-House Approach to Save Ratepayer Dollars

With the rising cost of materials and contracted services, the Borough of Conshohocken Authority (BCA) continues to look for innovative ways to reduce expenses while maintaining high-quality operations. One of the most effective strategies has been completing larger projects in-house using our skilled staff.

One of the Authority's largest operating costs is sludge hauling. A key factor in reducing this cost is how efficiently we remove water from sludge—a process known as dewatering. To improve this process, a chemical called polymer is added to help bind fine particles together, allowing equipment to separate water more effectively. The drier the sludge, the lower the cost to transport and dispose of it.

Our existing polymer batching system, which is nearly 19 years old, is due for replacement. Initially, we explored replacing the system in-kind. However, due to its size and stainless steel construction, the estimated cost ranged from \$175,000 to \$225,000.

Rather than simply replacing the old system, BCA evaluated newer technologies and visited other wastewater facilities to see what approaches were working best today. Many facilities have transitioned to modern “on-demand” polymer systems. These systems are more compact, operate



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without large tanks, and have fewer moving parts, resulting in lower maintenance costs and freeing up valuable space for future improvements.

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MEETINGS

April 28

May 26

June 23

July 28

August 25

September 22

**Meetings are held in
the Borough Hall:
400 Fayette Street
Conshohocken**

Meeting time 6:30 pm

A Day in the Life of a BCA Wastewater Operator

Behind every clean stream, flowing river, and reliable sewer system is a team of highly trained professionals working around the clock — often out of sight, but always essential. Wastewater operators are responsible for protecting public health and the environment every single day. Their work doesn't stop when the weather turns bad, during holidays, or in the middle of the night because wastewater never stops flowing.

Starting Before You Do

Our typical day often begins at 6 a.m. Operators arrive at the

treatment plant to review system data, check equipment status, and ensure everything is running properly.

This includes monitoring flow rates, pump operations, and treatment performance. Even small changes in the system can signal bigger issues, so attention to detail is critical.

Science in Action

Wastewater treatment is both hands-on and highly technical. Operators routinely perform the following functions:

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In-House Approach Saves Ratepayer Dollars

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After determining this was the right direction, BCA moved forward with designing and constructing a new system in-house. Drawing on insights from neighboring facilities, our Maintenance Foreman, John Walski, led the effort—measuring, sourcing materials, and building the system in approximately one week.

The new system was customized to meet BCA's specific needs, and once final electrical connections are completed by a

licensed contractor, it will be fully operational. The total project cost is expected to come in under \$35,000, a fraction of the cost of a traditional replacement.

This project highlights BCA's commitment to responsible financial management, innovation, and collaboration within the wastewater industry. By leveraging in-house expertise and learning from our peers, we continue to find smart solutions that benefit both our system and our ratepayers.

Wastewater Operators Protect Public Health

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- Collect and analyze samples to ensure proper treatment
- Adjust chemical dosing and biological processes
- Monitor levels of oxygen, solids, and nutrients
- Ensure compliance with strict DEP environmental regulations

It's a job that blends biology, chemistry, and engineering — all in real time.

Problem Solvers in the Field

No two days are exactly the same. Operators respond to alarms, troubleshoot equipment, and work in the field to inspect our pump station, sewer lines, and infrastructure. From clearing blockages caused by grease, roots, and debris to managing increased flows during heavy rain, operators must be ready to respond quickly and effectively.

When It Rains, They Work Harder

Storm events can dramatically increase the volume of water entering the system. Operators closely monitor conditions and make adjustments to prevent overflows and maintain treatment performance, often working long hours in challenging conditions.

Training & Certification

Becoming a wastewater operator requires specialized PA DEP training and certification. Operators must pass state exams, complete ongoing education, and stay current with evolving regulations and technology.

Their expertise ensures that treated water meets all environmental standards before it is safely returned to local waterways.

Protecting What Matters Most

While much of their work happens behind the scenes, the impact is felt throughout the community. Wastewater operators help:

- Protect public health
- Preserve the environment
- Maintain reliable infrastructure
- Support economic growth

More Than a Job

For many operators, this isn't just a job, it's a commitment to their community. Whether it's responding to an emergency at 2 a.m., or ensuring everything runs smoothly during a holiday weekend, they take pride in keeping the system working for everyone.

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Next time you turn on the tap or flush the toilet, remember there's a dedicated team working every day to keep our water clean and our community running.

Don't Rinse Grease

When fats, oils, and grease (FOG) go down the drain, they don't simply disappear. They grow.

After cooking, it may seem harmless to rinse grease, oil, or food scraps down the sink with hot water. But once that grease enters the sewer system, it cools, hardens, and sticks to the inside of pipes. Over time, it builds layer upon layer, narrowing the pipe and restricting flow — much like cholesterol in arteries.

From Grease to Blockage

What starts as a thin coating can quickly turn into a major obstruction. Grease combines with other debris like wipes, food particles, and paper products to form large masses that block sewer lines. These blockages can lead to:

- Sewer backups into homes and businesses
- Street and basement flooding
- Costly emergency repairs
- Environmental contamination of local waterways

What Residents Can Do

Everyone plays a role in protecting the sewer system. Simple changes at home can make a big difference:

- Never pour grease down the drain — even with hot water or soap
- Let grease cool and dispose of it in the trash
- Wipe pots, pans, and plates with a paper towel before washing
- Avoid using the garbage disposal for greasy or fatty foods

A Message for Restaurants & Food Service Establishments

Commercial kitchens are one of the largest contributors of FOG to the sewer system. Proper grease management is not only required — it protects your business and the community.

Key practices include:

- Maintaining and regularly cleaning grease traps/interceptors
- Keeping accurate pumping and maintenance records
- Training staff on proper disposal practices
- Never bypassing or modifying grease control equipment

Failure to properly manage grease can result in sewer backups, enforcement actions, and costly damages.

Protecting Our System Together

Grease-related blockages are one of the leading causes of sewer system problems — and one of the most preventable. By keeping FOG out of the drains, we reduce maintenance costs, prevent backups, and protect our waterways.