Big Storm? No Problem!

One of the greatest challenges a wastewater service provider faces is a big winter storm. Storms present a challenge because a fraction of rainwater falling on the ground works its way through the soil and eventually seeps into pipe joints or defects in the pipe system. This excess water causes flows to increase above their typical level, which stresses the pipe network and associated treatment capacity. Part of the District’s role in managing the system is to find ways to limit the amount of infiltration and to provide sufficient capacity for any increases that occur.

Oro Loma is proud to say that during the recent heavy rains, the District did not have one single overflow or discharge of untreated or partially-treated wastewater!

In 2007, Oro Loma completed the largest project in the District’s 98-year history—the Capacity Restoration Project. This restored the plant’s capacity to treat an average of 20 million gallons of wastewater per day, and up to 106 million gallons per day during heavy flows, all to the highest federal, state, and regional standards. During the January rains, the plant recorded an instantaneous peak flowrate of 77 million gallons, a volume well within the restored plant’s wet weather capacity. Staff prepares for rain events by keeping all equipment in proper operating conditions, practicing preventative maintenance, and having operations and maintenance personnel available if needed.

Oro Loma, like most Bay Area sanitary districts, has a wastewater collection system that is separate from the stormwater collection system. In addition to rainwater that seeps into the District’s mains, some of the increase in water flow during wet weather comes from cracked home laterals and from rain gutters that are illegally connected to the sewer system. You can help decrease water infiltration into the wastewater collection system by keeping your home lateral in good repair and by being sure not to connect storm gutters or drains to the sewer system.

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Oro Loma is one of five sanitary districts that make up the East Bay Dischargers Authority (EBDA). Fully treated wastewater is dechlorinated and discharged deep into San Francisco Bay. The EBDA surge tower can be seen here next to the Oro Loma treatment plant.