

August 11, 2010

RE: July 22, 2010 Storm

Dear South Milwaukee Resident or Property Owner:

This letter is being sent to you based on storm related property damage reported to the city or damage to properties in the surrounding neighborhood. Although you may not have been contacted following the storm, city officials are very concerned regarding losses incurred by residents. We have documented more than 400 residents with storm related damages. Since July 22, various city departments have been collecting flood damaged debris, troubleshooting system problems, investigating flood damages, repairing facilities, and executing emergency construction contracts where appropriate.

We understand that many property owners with damages from this storm had flood related damages in June 2008 (and possibly prior years), and are looking for answers to reduce the risk of problems in the future. The recorded data shows that July 2010 was the second wettest calendar month ever in Milwaukee, exceeded only by June, 2008. At South Milwaukee's observation point, rainfall totals were 7.55 inches in June, and 11.30 inches in July, for a two month record total of 18.85 inches. Rainfall during the July 22-23 storm totaled 7.85 inches, including over 4.5 inches of rain within a 2 ½ hour period during the evening storm. At the stream gauge in South Milwaukee, Oak Creek peaked at 3.25 feet above flood stage (the highest recorded level is 3.5 feet). Essentially, the public storm sewer and sanitary sewer systems were overloaded in many areas during the peak of the storm, causing localized flooding and sanitary backups. Many residents also reported private property problems such as overflowed sump crocks and seepage through basement walls due to high ground water conditions, flooded yards and basement window wells.

As many of you probably know, South Milwaukee has separate storm sewer and sanitary sewer systems. Storm sewers collect run-off from street and yard inlets, sump pumps where connected, parking lots, and other areas which outlet directly to Oak Creek and other tributaries to Lake Michigan. The sanitary sewer system is designed to collect and treat sewage at the city's treatment plant. In several low-lying areas of the city, lift stations pump sewage to get it to the plant. During normal flow, the sanitary system works as designed, and has a reasonable allowance for inflow and infiltration caused by a variety of sources, such as foundation drains in older homes, leaking pipe joints in older pipes, etc. During large storm events, inflow of clear water into the sanitary system increases due to legal (and possibly illegal) connections, overflowed sump crocks, manholes at flooded intersections, and other factors. The pumping capacity of three major lift stations were exceeded on July 22, and overflow operations were implemented. Emergency relief stations previously constructed and portable pumps could not get excess water out of the system fast enough.

The City has made major investments to improve the Wastewater Treatment Facility and sanitary and storm sewer systems. However, it is recognized that the city needs to continue with actions to reduce the risk of flooding and sanitary backups. In this regard, the Common Council has authorized the City Engineer to obtain consultant services to prepare an action plan for strategies to reduce clear water inflow and improve the sanitary system in areas of the city where there are recurring problems. The action plan will likely include video review of pipes and system investigation, as well as capital improvements. Major improvements will be expensive, and will

likely take several years to fund. Interim, less costly improvements will be evaluated for implementation.

Some residents in flood prone areas have taken steps to help protect their property such as multiple sump pumps, floor drain plugs, and sanitary back water valves , which have worked in some cases. If you are in an area that has recurring problems, you may want to consider steps to help reduce the risk of damages to your property as the city takes steps to improve the overall system.

Again, city officials acknowledge that personal losses from these storms are frustrating and costly. We appreciate your assistance during review of problem areas, and your continued support as we identify potential solutions. Further correspondence will be mailed if the city is undertaking a specific project near your property. Otherwise, updated information will be available on the city website: [www.ci.south-milwaukee.wi.us](http://www.ci.south-milwaukee.wi.us) . If you would like to discuss specific problems further, you may contact City Engineer Kyle Vandercar at 414-762-2222 ext. 136, or by email: [vandercar@ci.south-milwaukee.wi.us](mailto:vandercar@ci.south-milwaukee.wi.us). Due to the volume of inquiries, please be patient for a response.

Sincerely,  
CITY OF SOUTH MILWAUKEE

THOMAS ZEPECKI  
Mayor

KYLE VANDERCAR, P.E.  
City Engineer

TZ/jm