



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Pat McCrory
Governor

John E. Skvarla, III
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October 17, 2014

To: City and County Water and Sewer Districts

From: Linda Culpepper, Director, Division of Waste Management, NC DENR ^{KC}
Tom Reeder, Director, Division of Water Resources, NC DENR ^{TR}
Megan Davies, MD, State Epidemiologist, Division of Public Health, NC DHHS ^{MD}

RE: Disposal of blood and body fluids as regulated medical waste by sanitary sewer systems

The identification of patients with Ebola virus infection in Dallas, Texas in recent weeks has raised questions regarding the appropriateness of disposal of blood and body fluids from such patients using sanitary sewer systems. While there have been no identified Ebola cases in North Carolina, these inquiries have prompted a response to these concerns.

Current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has indicated that it is safe for Ebola patients to use a bathroom connected to a sanitary sewer:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/hcp/environmental-infection-control-in-hospitals.html>. Additionally, the CDC has reiterated that sewage-handling processes in the United States (e.g., anaerobic digestion, composting, and disinfection) are designed to inactivate infectious agents. Public wastewater treatment plants routinely accept inflow from hospitals, other healthcare facilities with patients, and homes of persons who may be carriers of any of a variety of infectious diseases. As such, wastewater treatment plants treat human body wastes with a range of infectious organisms on a daily basis.

The NC DPH and NC DENR understand that individual sewerage districts may have specific concerns that are not fully addressed by the CDC guidance. When there are concerns regarding the suitability of the sanitary sewer system to handle patient body wastes local methods may be adopted. These methods should be an addition to CDC guidance (CDC guidance constitutes a minimum requirement).

The CDC and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will continue to evaluate this situation and may update the current guidance. Utility operators are reminded to always follow proper protocols for personal protective equipment (PPE) when coming into contact with untreated wastewater. For specific questions please contact:

- NC DENR Division of Water Resources: Jeff Poupart at 919-807-6309
- NC Division of Public Health: Dr. Rick Langley at 919-707-5913
- NC Division of Waste Management: Bill Patrakis at 919-707- 8290