SEWER SPILL ESTIMATION GUIDE

Developed by the Orange County Area Waste Discharge Requirements Steering Committee

Sewer Spill Estimation Guide

A Guide to Estimating Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) Volumes

Developed by the Orange County Area
Waste Discharge Requirements Steering Committee
Orange County, CA

February 18, 2014

Acknowledgements

This Sewer Spill Estimation Guide has been compiled through the efforts of members of the Orange County Wastewater Discharge Requirements (WDR) Steering Committee. This committee was originally formed to address the requirements of the original WDR imposed by the California Regional Water Quality Board, Region 8 and later the statewide WDR imposed by the California State Water Resources Control Board. Committee members who assisted in the compilation of this Sewer Spill Estimation Guide are:

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Disclaimer

This Sewer Spill Estimation Guide is freely offered to agencies to assist the user with the estimation process for a sanitary sewer overflow. Methods used for spill estimation and the estimate itself are solely the responsibility of the agency making the estimate. The authors or contributors to this Sewer Spill Estimation Guide do not accept any responsibility for the spill estimation methods used; their accuracy or any spill estimate determined through the use of this guide. Information found in this guide is commonly available on the internet and is also common practice with many cities and sewering agencies throughout Southern California.

No statewide or national standards issued by a regulatory agency exist at this time.

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SSO Volume Estimation

Accurate flow estimation is essential to determine the volume of a Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO). An accurate estimate of an SSO is required for reporting to the California Integrated Water Quality System (CIQWS) and to the Orange County Health Care Agency. The estimated volume of an SSO is used to determine the category of the SSO and can also be used in the calculation of penalties or fines from the State or Regional Water Quality Control Boards in California. Additionally, accurate flow estimation is important to determine the extent of the cleanup and its effectiveness.

Volume estimation is basically the flow rate (gallons per minute) times the amount of time (in minutes) the flow has occurred. Each SSO tends to be unique requiring different strategies for determining the volume of the SSO. Different methods can also be used for the same SSO acting as a check to ensure the most accurate estimate. The method(s) utilized will be determined by several factors including the type of SSO and the personnel responding. Some SSO volumes, due to terrain, rainfall or other factors, can be very difficult for field staff to determine and may require someone with additional expertise. There is no one method that works for all types of SSOs. The following are methods that may be utilized for SSO volume estimation. These methods are effective means of estimating a sewer spill volume during dry weather but may not be effective during rain events.

During rain events, infiltration and/or inflow into the collection system and runoff in the stormwater system, including the curb and gutter, can affect the SSO estimate. When estimating an SSO during a rain event, the SSO estimate is to include only the wastewater that left the collection system and not any waters that the wastewater comingled with after leaving the system. The same is true for any wash down water; although contaminated, the water is not considered part of the SSO estimate. Any water that infiltrated into the collection system upstream of the SSO and subsequently became part of the SSO is included in the SSO volume estimate.

Start Time

Determining the start time for an SSO is one of the most critical, yet can be one of the most difficult, factors to determine. Depending upon the location and time of day, an SSO may occur for some time before it is reported to the City or Agency or it may trickle for an extended period of time before being noticed. What is known is that the SSO started some time before the City or Agency was notified. It is common for SSOs to start and stop as flows in the pipeline routinely rise and fall because most blockages do not entirely block the flow in the pipe. Every effort should be utilized to determine the most accurate start time of each SSO. These efforts may include:

- If possible, contact the person who reported the SSO to determine when they became aware of the SSO.
- Make contact with residences or businesses in the area of the SSO to determine if there were any witnesses that could help establish the start time.
- Conditions change during the SSO. This is particularly true in remote areas out of public view. Initially, there may be an amount of toilet paper and solids around the spill site. This will increase the longer the SSO continues. After a few days to a week, these may form a light brown residue that may turn dark after a few weeks to a month.

Stop Time

The stop time is the time that wastewater stopped overflowing. For manhole covers in low areas, this is noted by water flowing back into the manhole through the vent holes and should be easy to determine by SSO response personnel. Care should be taken to accurately record the time that the SSO stopped.

Photographs

Take photographs of the spill event. Try to include objects of known size in the photographs to give a perspective of the extent of the spill. Photographs should include the initial spill, remediation efforts, clean up, and the spill area after the spill remediation has been completed. Photographs should be maintained with the spill report information.

Flow Rate

The flow rate is the volume of flow per unit time that is escaping from the collection system. SSOs do not always occur at a constant rate. This is because flows into the collection system are not constant and rise and fall throughout the day. Additionally, most blockages are not full blockages. Pressure buildup as the wastewater surcharges in the pipe can cause the blockage to clear or partially clear, resulting in changes to the flow rate.

To make an SSO volume estimate as accurate as possible, the onsite City or Agency employee should note the time and the amount of change of any significant differences in flow noticed during the event. For example, if the employee determines the flow rate escaping from the manhole is 100 gallons per minute when they arrive on scene but noticed that it has dropped to 50 gallons per minute five minutes later, their report should reflect that fact. The estimated flow rate and the time period for that flow rate should be recorded. During any one SSO event there could be multiple flow rates spread over the duration of the SSO.

Volume Estimation Methods

Visual or Eyeball Method

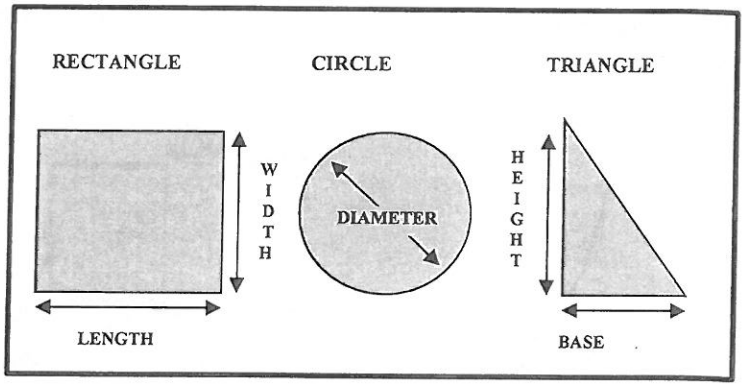
The volume of small spills can be estimated using an "eyeball estimate." To use this method, imagine the amount of water that would spill from a bucket or a barrel. A full bucket may contain 1, 2 or 5 gallons and a barrel contains 55 gallons when full. If the spill is larger than 55 gallons, try to divide the standing water into barrels and then multiply by 55 gallons. This method is useful for contained spills up to approximately 200 gallons. This method can be useful on spills that occur on hard surfaces such as concrete or asphalt. Crews can be trained by estimating the volume of a measured amount of potable water spilled upon concrete and asphalt surfaces.

Measured Volume

The volume of most small spills that have been contained can be estimated using this method. The shape, dimensions, and the depth of the contained wastewater are needed. The shape and

dimensions are used to calculate the area of the spills and the depth is used to calculate the volume.

Common Shapes and Dimensions



1. Sketch the shape of the contained wastewater.
2. Measure or pace off the dimensions.
3. Measure the depth at several locations and select an average.
4. Convert the dimensions, including depth, to feet.
5. Calculate the area:

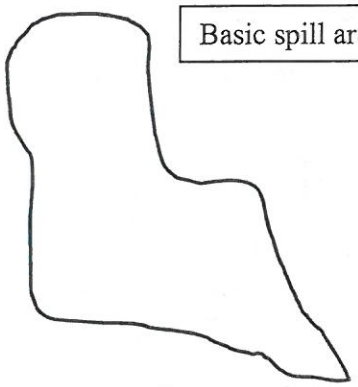
   Rectangle: Area = length (feet) x width (feet)

   Circle: Area = diameter (feet) x diameter (feet) x 3.14 divided by 4

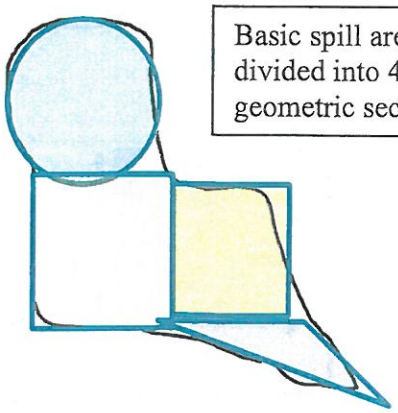
   Triangle: Area = base (feet) x height (feet) x 0.5
6. Multiply the area (square feet) times the depth (in feet) to obtain the volume in cubic feet.
7. Multiply the volume in cubic feet by 7.48 to convert to gallons

Not all SSOs will conform to a specific shape. When this occurs, break up the area of the SSO into various shapes or segments, then calculate the amount of wastewater spilled in each segment, adding them together to arrive at the total spill volume.

Example:

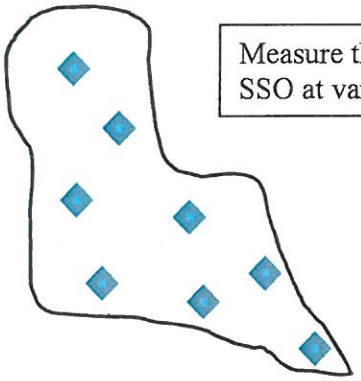


Basic spill area



Basic spill area divided into 4 geometric sections.

Determine the area of each of the geometric sections adding them all together to determine the total area of the spill.



Measure the depth of the SSO at various locations.

Where it is difficult to measure wet spots on asphalt, use a depth of 0.0026'or 1/32". For wet spots on concrete use depths of 0.0013'or 1/64" for reasonable estimates.

Inch to Feet Conversion:		
Inches	to	Feet
1/8"	=	0.01'
1/4"	=	0.02'
3/8"	=	0.03'
1/2"	=	0.04'
5/8"	=	0.05'
3/4"	=	0.06'
7/8"	=	0.07'
1"	=	0.08'
2"	=	0.17'
3"	=	0.25'
4"	=	0.33'
5"	=	0.42'
6"	=	0.50'
7"	=	0.58'
8"	=	0.67'
9"	=	0.75'
10"	=	0.83'
11"	=	0.92'
12"	=	1.00'

Sample Calculation:
A 20 ft x 20 ft square wet spot on concrete equals 3.9 gal and for asphalt is 7.8 gal.

Counting Connections

Once the location of the blockage has been established, the amount of the SSO could be estimated by counting the number of upstream connections. On the sewer atlas maps or GIS system, locate the pipeline where the SSO occurred. Count all of the developed parcels that are connected to the pipeline upstream of the blockage. The typical single family residential parcel may discharge 8 to 10 gallons of wastewater per hour during active times of the day. For a multi-family residential development such as an apartment or condo complex, count each apartment as a single family residential unit. Use the higher flow number (10 gallons per hour) during typical peak flow hours and the lower flow number (8 gallons per hour) during low flow periods. Multiply the number of connections times the average flow (8 to 10 gallons per hour) times the time period (duration) that the SSO occurred.

Example for an SSO occurring on a weekday at 8:00am:

Number of upstream connections	22
Estimated flow per parcel	10 gallons per hour
Duration of SSO event	45 minutes
Total spill estimation (22 x 10 x .75)	165 gallons

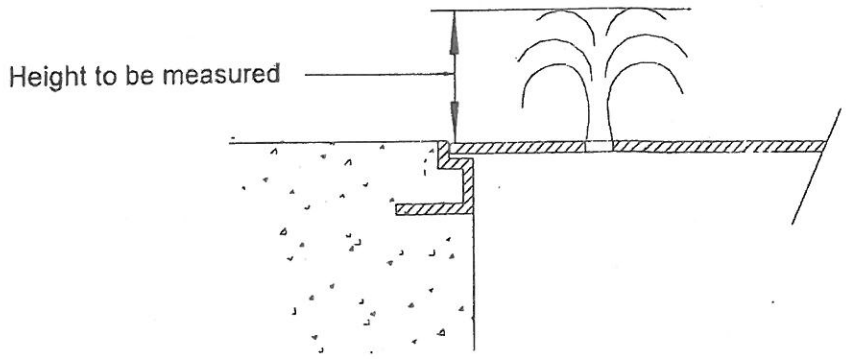
(22 connections x 10 gallons per hour x 45 minutes (.75 hour) = 165 gallons)

Data may be available in your drainage area from your capacity planners at your city or agency. Consult with them on reasonable flow amounts or rates of flow.

Pick and Vent Holes in Manhole Covers

Small SSOs will occur where the wastewater escaping from the manhole is isolated to the pick or vent holes in the cover. Larger SSOs may involve both the discharge from the pick and/or vent holes and the gap between the manhole cover and manhole frame. To estimate an SSO occurring from the manhole pick and vent holes, measure the height of the wastewater plume exiting the holes. Find that height and hole diameter on the manhole pick or vent hole chart to determine the flow rate escaping the pick/vent hole. Multiply the flow rate times the number of holes that are discharging wastewater. Once the total volume (gpm) has been determined,

multiply the gpm by the duration of the SSO in minutes. This will result in the total estimated gallons of the SSO.



Example: Measured height of plume exiting pick/vent hole is 1 inch from a ½-inch vent hole and there are 4 vent holes. The total volume per minute would be .94 gpm per hole (from attached chart) or 3.76 gpm total (.94 gpm x 4 holes) from the manhole cover. If the SSO lasted one hour, the total wastewater lost would be 226 gallons (3.76 x 60 = 225.6).

Number of pick holes	4
Flow from each pick hole	.94 gpm
Duration of SSO	60 minutes
Total SSO volume (.94 x 4 x 60=225.6)	226 gallons

Pick and Vent Hole Estimation Chart

Estimated Flows thru Manhole Cover Vent Holes and Pick Holes for SSO estimating

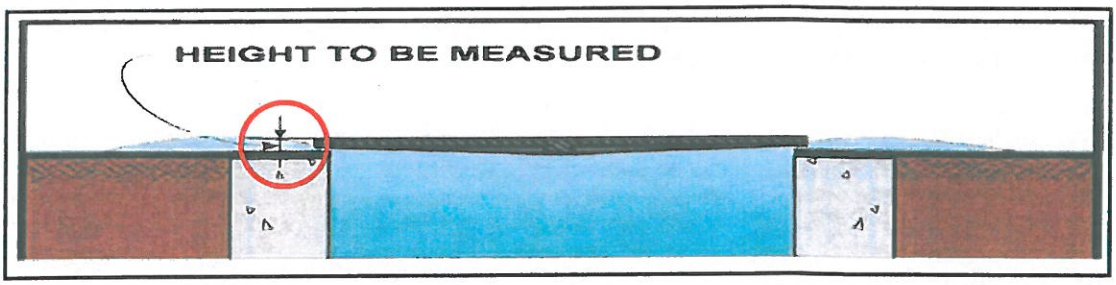
Hole Dia. inches	Area sq. ft.	Coeff.of Vel. Cv	Coeff. Of Cont. Cc	C Cv x Cc	Water Ht inches	Water Ht inches	Water Ht feet	Q cfs	Q gpm	Q gph
	Formula: =0.785*Ax*Ax/144			Formula: =Ix*449			Formula: =Gx/12	Formula: =Ex*Bx*(SQRT(2*32.2*Hx))	Formula: =Ix*449	Formula: =Jx*60
Vent Hole										
0.50	0.00136	0.945	0.70	0.662	1/16 th	0.063	0.005	0.0005	0.23	14
0.50	0.00136	0.945	0.70	0.662	1/8 th	0.125	0.010	0.0007	0.33	20
0.50	0.00136	0.945	0.70	0.662	1/4 th	0.250	0.021	0.0010	0.47	28
0.50	0.00136	0.945	0.70	0.662	one half	0.500	0.042	0.0015	0.66	40
0.50	0.00136	0.945	0.70	0.662	3/4 ths	0.750	0.063	0.0018	0.81	49
0.50	0.00136	0.945	0.70	0.662	1 inch	1.000	0.083	0.0021	0.94	56
Vent Hole										
0.75	0.00307	0.955	0.67	0.640	1/16 th	0.063	0.005	0.0011	0.51	31
0.75	0.00307	0.955	0.67	0.640	1/8 th	0.125	0.010	0.0016	0.72	43
0.75	0.00307	0.955	0.67	0.640	1/4 th	0.250	0.021	0.0023	1.02	61
0.75	0.00307	0.955	0.67	0.640	one half	0.500	0.042	0.0032	1.44	87
0.75	0.00307	0.955	0.67	0.640	3/4 ths	0.750	0.063	0.0039	1.77	106
0.75	0.00307	0.955	0.67	0.640	1 inch	1.000	0.083	0.0045	2.04	122
Vent Hole										
1.00	0.00545	0.960	0.65	0.624	1/16 th	0.063	0.005	0.0020	0.88	53
1.00	0.00545	0.960	0.65	0.624	1/8 th	0.125	0.010	0.0028	1.25	75
1.00	0.00545	0.960	0.65	0.624	1/4 th	0.250	0.021	0.0039	1.77	106
1.00	0.00545	0.960	0.65	0.624	one half	0.500	0.042	0.0056	2.50	150
1.00	0.00545	0.960	0.65	0.624	3/4 ths	0.750	0.063	0.0068	3.06	184
1.00	0.00545	0.960	0.65	0.624	1 inch	1.000	0.083	0.0079	3.54	212
Pick Hole semicircular area										
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	1/16 th	0.063	0.005	0.0010	0.44	27
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	1/8 th	0.125	0.010	0.0014	0.63	38
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	1/4 th	0.250	0.021	0.0020	0.89	53
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	one half	0.500	0.042	0.0028	1.25	75
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	3/4 ths	0.750	0.063	0.0034	1.53	92
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	1 inch	1.000	0.083	0.0039	1.77	106
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	1-1/2 inch	1.500	0.125	0.0048	2.17	130
1.00	0.00273	0.960	0.65	0.624	2 inches	2.000	0.167	0.0056	2.51	150

Courtesy of OCSD: Created 5/17/99, as an estimating tool for field staff. This is based on flow through orifices assumptions. Your city or agency may want to develop a similar tool.

$Q=CA(2gh)^{.5}$ Where Q=cfs C=0.624 A=area(sq. ft.) g=32.2 ft/sec/sec
h= water height (ft.)

Manhole Ring

Some manhole covers in use today typically only have one pick hole forcing most of the wastewater to escape from the perimeter of the manhole cover during higher flow SSOs. To estimate the volume in this example, measure the observed height of the wastewater plume exiting the manhole cover. Find the height and manhole diameter on the Manhole with Cover in Place to determine the flow rate escaping the manhole. The chart has two columns, one for 24-inch diameter covers and one for 36-inch diameter covers. Wastewater will also be escaping from the pick hole and must be accounted for separately by following the instructions for estimating an SSO from pick/vent hole. Multiply the flow rate times the number of holes that are discharging. The total estimated rate (gpm) is determined by adding together the rate being lost (gpm) from around the cover with the rate being lost (gpm) from the pick and/or vent hole(s). Once the total rate (gpm) has been determined, multiply the gpm by the duration of the SSO in minutes. This will result in the total estimated gallons of the SSO.



Example: The measured height of the plume exiting the ring of a 36-inch manhole is 1 inch. The total volume per minute would be 13 gpm from around the ring of a 36-inch manhole cover (from the attached chart). (Calculate the amount exiting the pick hole(s) and add to the total being lost around the ring). If the SSO lasted one hour the total wastewater lost would be 780 gallons (13 x 60 = 780).

Estimated loss around ring (from chart)	13 gpm
Duration of SSO	60 minutes
Total SSO (without loss from pick hole)	780 gallons

(13 gal/min x 60 minutes = 780 gallons plus amount lost from pick hole(s))

ESTIMATED SSO FLOW OUT OF MH WITH COVER IN PLACE

24" COVER

Height of spout above M/H rim H in inches	S S O Q FLOW in gpm	in MGD	Min. Sewer size in which these flows are possible
1/4	1	0.001	
1/2	3	0.004	
3/4	6	0.008	
1	9	0.013	
1 1/4	12	0.018	
1 1/2	16	0.024	
1 3/4	21	0.030	
2	25	0.037	
2 1/4	31	0.045	
2 1/2	38	0.054	
2 3/4	45	0.065	
3	54	0.077	
3 1/4	64	0.092	
3 1/2	75	0.107	
3 3/4	87	0.125	
4	100	0.145	
4 1/4	115	0.166	
4 1/2	131	0.189	
4 3/4	148	0.214	
5	166	0.240	
5 1/4	185	0.266	
5 1/2	204	0.294	
5 3/4	224	0.322	6"
6	244	0.352	
6 1/4	265	0.382	
6 1/2	286	0.412	
6 3/4	308	0.444	
7	331	0.476	
7 1/4	354	0.509	
7 1/2	377	0.543	
7 3/4	401	0.578	8"
8	426	0.613	
8 1/4	451	0.649	
8 1/2	476	0.686	
8 3/4	502	0.723	
9	529	0.761	

36" COVER

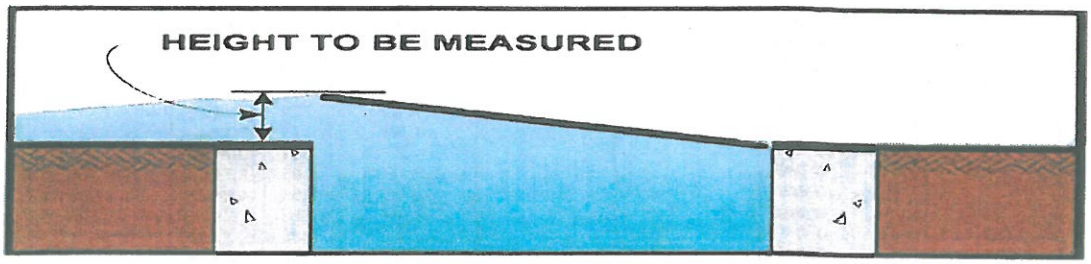
Height of spout above M/H rim H in inches	S S O Q FLOW in gpm	in MGD	Min. Sewer size in which these flows are possible
1/4	1	0.002	
1/2	4	0.006	
3/4	8	0.012	
1	13	0.019	
1 1/4	18	0.026	
1 1/2	24	0.035	
1 3/4	31	0.044	
2	37	0.054	
2 1/4	45	0.065	
2 1/2	55	0.079	
2 3/4	66	0.095	
3	78	0.113	
3 1/4	93	0.134	
3 1/2	109	0.157	
3 3/4	127	0.183	
4	147	0.211	
4 1/4	169	0.243	
4 1/2	192	0.276	
4 3/4	217	0.312	6"
5	243	0.350	
5 1/4	270	0.389	
5 1/2	299	0.430	
5 3/4	327	0.471	
6	357	0.514	
6 1/4	387	0.558	8"
6 1/2	419	0.603	
6 3/4	451	0.649	
7	483	0.696	
7 1/4	517	0.744	
7 1/2	551	0.794	
7 3/4	587	0.845	10"
8	622	0.896	
8 1/4	659	0.949	
8 1/2	697	1.003	
8 3/4	734	1.057	
9	773	1.113	

The formula used to develop Table 1 measures the maximum height of the water coming out of the maintenance manhole above the rim. The formula was taken from Hydraulics and Its Application by A.H. Gibson (Constable & Co. Limited).

Partially Covered Manhole

Sometimes an SSO will occur that only lifts one side of the manhole cover. This is especially true of manholes where the cover is on an incline with the cover lifting on the downward side of the manhole. To estimate the volume of an SSO under these conditions, calculate the area (in square feet) from where the wastewater is escaping and the velocity (in feet per second) that the wastewater is normally traveling in the sewer at half the pipe depth. The velocity is estimated from visual observation with 2 feet/second or less being a small velocity, 4 to 5 feet/second being a medium velocity, and 7 feet/second or higher being a large velocity. Velocities in the sewer above 7 feet/second may be strong enough to blow the manhole cover off. Higher velocities also tend to raise the manhole lid higher. Next, multiply by the duration

(in seconds) that the SSO occurred. Finally, multiply by 7.48 to determine the volume of the SSO in gallons. The formula is Volume (gallons) = Area (sq. ft.) x Velocity (ft/sec) x Time (in seconds) x 7.48 (gal/cu. ft.).



Example: The measured height of the plume exiting the side ring of a 24-inch manhole is 2 inches. Based upon the data provided in the Area Calculation Chart below, a 2-inch plume from one side of a 24-inch manhole cover provides 0.524 square feet of area. The velocity of the flow is estimated at 4 ft/sec (visual observation) with the assumed duration of the flow lasting for one hour. The total amount of the SSO is estimated at 56,441 gallons (.524 x 4 x 60 x 60 x 7.48 = 56,441)

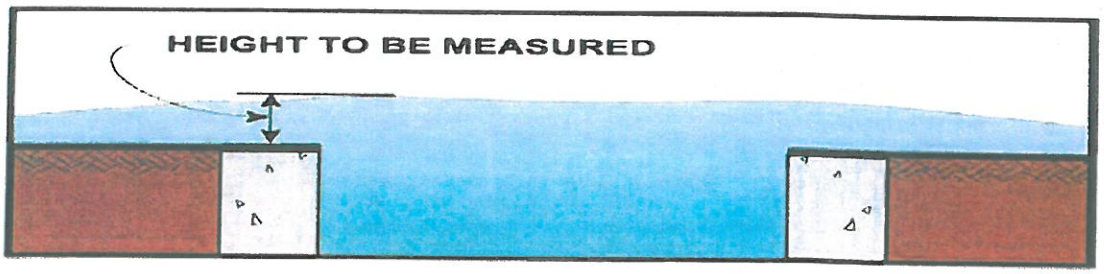
Height of plume	2 inches
Area for 24 inch manhole	0.524 square feet
Estimated velocity	4 ft/sec
Duration of SSO	60 minutes
Conversion from cu. ft. to gallons	7.48
Total estimated SSO volume	56,441 gallons

(.524 sq. ft. x 4 ft/sec x 60 minutes x 60 sec/min x 7.48 gal/cu ft = 56,441 gal)

Area Calculation Chart		
Height of Flow	24 Inch Manhole	36 Inch Manhole
.5 inches	0.131 sq. ft.	0.195 sq. ft.
1 inches	0.262 sq. ft.	0.391 sq. ft.
1.5 inches	0.393 sq. ft.	0.586 sq. ft.
2 inches	0.524 sq. ft.	0.782 sq. ft.
2.5 inches	0.655 sq. ft.	0.977 sq. ft.
3 inches	0.786 sq. ft.	1.173 sq. ft.
3.5 inches	0.917 sq. ft.	1.368 sq. ft.
4 inches	1.048 sq. ft.	1.564 sq. ft.

Open Manhole

In large events the force of the overflowing wastewater will have sufficient pressure and volume to unseat the cover from the frame and move the manhole cover away from the manhole. Typically, when the SSO rates reach approximately 7 cfs (approximately 3,000 gpm or about 4.32 mgd), there is sufficient flow and pressure to blow off the manhole cover. To estimate the volume of an SSO where the manhole cover has been removed, the average height of the plume of wastewater exiting the manhole must be measured. This measurement is from the pavement surface close to the manhole ring to the top of the plume. Take several measurements in several locations around the ring and average the findings. If possible, and being safe to protect yourself from the open manhole, find the average height of the plume for the size of the manhole lid (24-inch or 36-inch diameter) on the Area Calculation Chart to determine the rate of flow exiting the manhole. Multiply the flow rate expressed in gallons per minute from the chart multiplied by the duration of the SSO in minutes to determine the total volume of the SSO. A photo taken at a safe distance upon arrival may help you refine your estimate.



Example: Determine the observed height of the plume at several locations around the ring of the manhole and average the results. Determine the size of the manhole cover. If the average height of the plume exiting an open 24-inch diameter manhole is 2 inches, find 2 inches on the 24-inch Manhole Cover Removed Chart. Based upon the data provided in the Manhole Cover Removed Chart, the flow in gallons per minute would be 3,444 gpm. If the duration of the flow lasted for one hour (60 minutes), the total amount of the SSO would be estimated at 206,640 gallons (3,444 x 60 = 206,640).

Height of plume (average) on 24-inch manhole	2 inches
Estimated flow from chart	3,444 gpm
Duration of SSO	60 minutes
Estimated SSO total volume	206,640 gallons

(Est flow from chart 3,444 x 60 minutes = 206,640)

ESTIMATED SSO FLOW OUT OF M/H WITH COVER REMOVED

24" FRAME

Water Height above M/H frame H in inches	S S O FLOW Q in gpm	in MGD	Min. Sewer size in which these flows are possible
1/8	28	0.04	
1/4	62	0.09	
3/8	111	0.16	
1/2	160	0.23	
5/8	215	0.31	6"
3/4	354	0.51	8"
7/8	569	0.82	10"
1	799	1.15	12"
1 1/8	1,035	1.49	
1 1/4	1,340	1.93	15"
1 3/8	1,660	2.39	
1 1/2	1,986	2.86	
1 5/8	2,396	3.45	18"
1 3/4	2,799	4.03	
1 7/8	3,132	4.51	
2	3,444	4.96	21"
2 1/8	3,750	5.4	
2 1/4	3,986	5.74	
2 3/8	4,215	6.07	
2 1/2	4,437	6.39	
2 5/8	4,569	6.58	24"
2 3/4	4,687	6.75	
2 7/8	4,799	6.91	
3	4,910	7.07	

36" FRAME

Water Height above M/H frame H in inches	S S O FLOW Q in gpm	in MGD	Min. Sewer size in which these flows are possible
1/8	49	0.07	
1/4	111	0.16	
3/8	187	0.27	6"
1/2	271	0.39	
5/8	361	0.52	8"
3/4	458	0.66	
7/8	556	0.8	10"
1	660	0.95	12"
1 1/8	1,035	1.49	
1 1/4	1,486	2.14	15"
1 3/8	1,951	2.81	
1 1/2	2,424	3.49	18"
1 5/8	2,903	4.18	
1 3/4	3,382	4.87	
1 7/8	3,917	5.64	21"
2	4,458	6.42	
2 1/8	5,000	7.2	24"
2 1/4	5,556	8	
2 3/8	6,118	8.81	
2 1/2	6,764	9.74	
2 5/8	7,403	10.66	
2 3/4	7,972	11.48	30"
2 7/8	8,521	12.27	
3	9,062	13.05	
3 1/8	9,604	13.83	
3 1/4	10,139	14.6	
3 3/8	10,625	15.3	36"
3 1/2	11,097	15.98	
3 5/8	11,569	16.66	
3 3/4	12,035	17.33	
3 7/8	12,486	17.98	
4	12,861	18.52	
4 1/8	13,076	18.83	
4 1/4	13,285	19.13	
4 3/8	13,486	19.42	

Disclaimer:
This sanitary sewer overflow table was developed by Ed Euyen, Civil Engineer, P.E. No. 33955, California, for County Sanitation District 1. This table is provided as an example. Other Agencies may want to develop their own estimating tables.

Pictorial Reference

Currently there are two picture charts being widely used to assist with estimating SSO volumes. The older chart is the city of San Diego's Manhole Overflow Rate Chart with the

newer chart being the CWEA Southern Section Collection Systems Committee (SSCSC) Manhole Overflow Gauge. Each chart is a pictorial depiction of how an overflowing manhole appears at a given flow rate. The SSCSC Manhole Overflow Gauge has an additional picture for each flow rate showing a wide angle view of the spill area. When using either of the pictorial reference charts, select which picture most accurately represents the SSO being estimated. Use the gpm of the associated picture multiplied times the duration of the SSO to determine the total spill volume. Example: If the selected picture shows 300 gpm and the duration of SSO is 55 minutes, the total estimated spill volume would be 16,500 gallons (300 gpm x 55 min).

Selected picture volume	300 gpm
Duration of SSO	55 minutes
Total estimated SSO	16,500 gallons
(300 gpm x 55 minutes = 16,500 gallons)	

Note: Data was obtained at training facilities where potable water was metered and photos were taken at various flow rates.

Training facilities also exist at the Orange County Sanitation District in Fountain Valley, CA.

As a reference point, an 8-inch diameter sewer flowing half full at a velocity of 2.5 ft/sec would have a flow rate of about 192 gal/min. If fully blocked, the SSO rate would be 192 gpm. For a partial blockage, the SSO rate will be less.

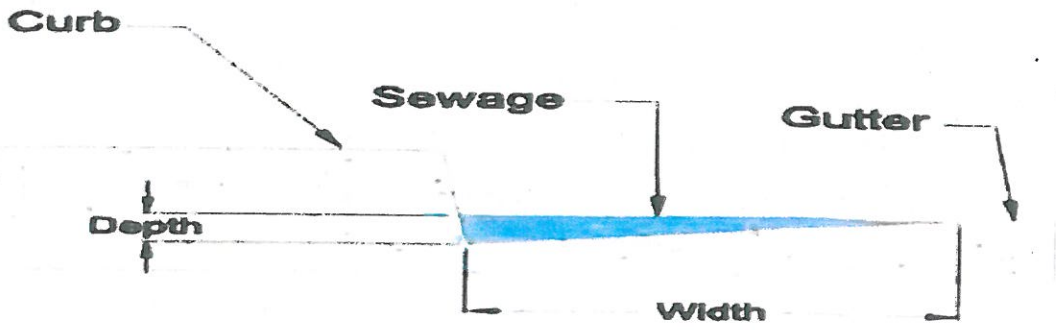
Other agencies have developed above ground estimating tools such as frame and cover sets that can be pressurized using potable water and simple flow meters.

City of San Diego Manhole Overflow Picture Chart

SSCSC Manhole Overflow Gauge

Gutter Flow (Simplified Version)

Although the traditional Manning's Equation is used to calculate flows in open channels, this simplified version can be used to measure SSOs that are flowing in open channels such as ditches, curb and gutter, etc. and still achieve reasonable estimations. Two things need to be determined to utilize this method of spill estimation, the cross sectional area of the channel and the velocity of the flow in the channel. First, determine the cross sectional dimensions of the channel (width and depth of flow) to determine the area of the flow. Then determine the velocity of the flow in the channel. To determine the velocity, drop a small floating object (ping pong ball, leaf, small piece of wood, etc.) into the flow and time how long it takes the object to travel a measured distance. This should be practiced several times in a non-SSO situation, and averaged to determine the flow velocity. The velocity of the flow multiplied by the cross sectional area of the flow multiplied by the duration of the SSO will result in the approximate volume of the SSO.



$Q = V \times A$

Flow (gal/min) = Velocity (ft/sec) x Area (ft^2) x 7.48 gal/cu ft x 60 sec/min

Example: If the cross section triangular area of the spill is calculated at .5 sq.ft. with the velocity measured at .25 ft. per second, the flow would be .125 cubic feet per second. Multiply times 449 (one cubic foot per second equals 449 gallons per minute) to determine the gallons per minute (56 gpm). If the SSO lasted for 35 minutes the total estimated spill volume would be 1,964 gallons.

Simplified Cross Section Area of the SSO	
Estimated Triangular Area	0.5 square feet
Estimated Velocity	.25 feet per second
Duration of the SSO	35 minutes
Gallons per minute per cubic foot per second conversion	449
Total estimated spill volume	1,964 gallons

(Area .5 sq.ft. x Est velocity .25 ft. per sec. = .125 cfs x 449 = 56 gpm x 35 minutes = 1,964 estimated gallons spilled)

Gutters on steep hillsides will flow at higher velocities. Practice your estimating on flatter areas and steeper areas of your service area.

Bucket Method

This method can be used for small spills due to partial blockages where the entire flow stream could be captured in a bucket. Estimate how many minutes it takes to fill the bucket. Dividing the volume of the bucket (in gallons) by the elapsed time to fill the bucket (in minutes). This provides the flow rate in gallons per minute (gpm). Once the gpm has been established, multiply the gpm by the total time duration in minutes of the SSO until it stopped to determine the total estimated volume of the SSO.

Example: If it takes 30 seconds (.5 minutes) to fill a 5 gallon bucket and the total spill duration was 20 minutes, the total spill volume would be 200 gallons. (5gal/.5 min = 10 gpm x 20 min = 200 gal).

Time to fill a 5 gallon bucket	30 seconds (.5 minute)
Duration of SSO	20 minutes
Estimated spill volume	200 gallons

(5 gallons every 30 seconds equals 10 gallons per minute x 20 minutes = 200 gallons)

You can practice visual estimating by filling a bucket of known volume for a measured time from a garden hose.

Pipe Size

To calculate an SSO based upon pipe size requires the diameter of the pipe, the depth of flow in the pipe downstream of the blockage during and after the blockage, and the flow velocity in the pipe. This method calculates the amount of flow in the pipe at the same time of the day during the blockage compared to the amount of flow normally in the pipe to determine how much flow had been lost over time.

To use this method, measure the flow depth at the nearest manhole downstream from the blockage. Record the depth reading. Once the blockage has been cleared and the flow stabilized, measure the flow depth at the same manhole as before and record the reading. The attached chart can be used on various size pipelines where the velocity is 2.0 feet per second. Pipelines of other rates will have to be calculated.

To use the attached chart, find the depth of the flow during the blockage in column 1. Follow the row across to the diameter of the pipe where the blockage has occurred. The number listed will be the flow rate in gallons per minute for pipelines with a velocity of 2 feet per second. Next find the flow depth after the blockage has been removed and the flow stabilized. Move across the chart to the proper pipe size and record the flow rate for a free flowing pipeline. Subtract the flow rate from the blocked pipe from the flow rate of the free flowing pipe. The remainder will be the flow rate lost. Multiply the flow rate lost times the duration of the SSO to determine the total flow volume lost. Example: If the flow depth during the blockage of a 10-inch pipe was 1 inch, the flow rate would 25 gpm. After the blockage was cleared and the flow stabilized, the flow depth was now 5 inches then the flow rate would be 240 gpm. To determine the amount lost, subtract the gpm (pipe blocked) from the gpm (pipe cleared) (240 gpm – 25 gpm = 215gpm) leaving the flow rate of the SSO. Multiply the remaining flow rate multiplied by the duration of the SSO in minutes to estimate the total volume of the SSO.

Flow Depth Inches	8 " PIPE	10" PIPE	12" PIPE	15" PIPE	18" PIPE	21" PIPE	24" PIPE
1	20 GPM	25 GPM	30 GPM	35 GPM	40 GPM	45 GPM	50 GPM
2	60	70	80	85	95	105	125
3	110	125	135	150	175	185	210
4	160	180	200	235	260	285	320
5	190	240	280	315	360	380	445
6	260	310	355	415	455	500	555
7	290	370	425	495	570	620	695
8	320	430	500	600	680	760	815
9		465	575	690	800	890	965
10		490	625	775	905	1005	1120
11			685	870	1020	1135	1275
12			715	935	1130	1260	1410
13				1020	1240	1415	1580
14				1070	1345	1520	1690
15				1105	1425	1650	1850
16					1495	1760	1990
17					1550	1880	2110
18					1595	1980	2285
19						2050	2410
20						2115	2530
21						2160	2630
22							2700
23							2765
24							2820

Note: the chart assumes V = 2.0 feet per second and n = 0.013

1. Record the time that spill was reported.
2. Record the flow, in inches, downstream of the spill or blockage. Record the pipe size in inches. Determine flow rate in gallons per minute (GPM) using chart above.
3. Re-establish flow and allow stabilizing. Record the time that flow stabilizes and the depth of flow, in inches. Determine flow rate using chart above.
4. Subtract the flow rate calculated in #2 from the flow rate calculated in #3.
5. Multiply the result of 4 by the minutes elapsed from notification to stopping overflow.
6. Report total amount in gallons on the SSO Report.

Note: The above chart is only for pipelines of the diameters shown and flowing at a velocity of 2.0 ft/sec.

Metered Flow

Estimates of the amount of wastewater spilled from a continuously metered system can be achieved utilizing upstream and downstream flow meters located close to the point where the wastewater escaped. Flow meters may be located at strategic locations throughout the wastewater collection system or at the intake or discharge of wastewater pump or lift stations. Flow metering usually occurs on pressure systems. If a spill is suspected on a metered upstream wastewater line, check the flow meter readings for abnormalities and note the time they start. Also check the flow meter readings at the downstream flow meter. If the downstream readings are lower than usual, the difference may be the amount of wastewater being lost to a spill. Abnormal pumping cycles for pump or lift stations located downstream from the spill can also be used to estimate the volume of a spill. Portable flow meters could also be installed in gravity sewers after a SSO event to help verify average flows at various times of the day when full or partial blockages may have occurred. You should also perform

this on the same day of the week that the SSO occurred. This is also a good way to understand how flows will change during the day in various parts of your system.

Rain Events

Previous examples of methods throughout the document were all in dry weather situations. Rain events cause substantial difficulties for SSO responders in establishing an accurate estimate of an SSO. Infiltration into the sewer system will increase, sometimes dramatically, the system flow including the amount of the SSO. When estimating the SSO amount during a rain event, the estimate is to include only the amount of wastewater that left the collection system (this includes any clear water inflow and/or infiltration (I&I) that entered the collection system upstream of the SSO) and not any waters that the wastewater comingled with after leaving the system. Although the comingled waters are considered contaminated by the SSO and may be involved in the cleanup, they should not be considered in the estimate of the volume of sewage spilled for the event. Consult with your city or agency management or your site-specific procedures to be used during wet weather SSOs.

Saturated Soils

Spills that have occurred on or migrated to grassy or dirt areas can be estimated if the area is dry and is not regularly irrigated like a field or dirt parking lot. This method is effective only during dry weather and not during or after a rain event. To estimate how much wastewater has been lost to the soil, first determine how many cubic feet of soil has been wetted. First determine the size of the area where the spill occurred. This is done in the same manner as for spills that occurred on hard surfaces and as discussed in the Measured Volume Method. Next determine how deep the soil has been saturated. To determine the depth of the soil saturation, dig several test holes with a round point shovel until dry soil is reached. Measure the depth of each hole and determine the average depth of the saturated soil. Multiply the area of the spill (in square feet) times the average depth of the soil saturation to determine the amount (in cubic feet) of saturated soil. Different types of soils will retain moisture in different amounts. Water will penetrate sandy soils quicker than clay soils and clay soils are capable of holding more moisture than sandy soils. Use an average of 18% moisture content when estimating the amount of wastewater that has saturated the soil.

Example: If the spill was contained in a dry dirt or grassy area of 10 feet by 20 feet, the area of the spill would be 200 square feet if it was a perfect rectangle (assumed). If the wastewater penetrated the soil to an average depth of 3 inches, the total amount of saturated soil would be 50 cubic feet (10 x 20 x .25 = 50 cf.). To determine the amount of wastewater suspended in the wetted soil, multiply the 50 cubic feet times 7.48 gallons per cubic foot (50 cf x 7.48 gal/cf = 374 gallons). Next multiply the gallons times the average amount of moisture the soil can hold (use 18% as a rough estimate or calculate the soil moisture) to determine the actual estimated amount of wastewater that has saturated the soil (374 gal x .18 = 67.3 gallons of wastewater contained in the soil for the area of the spill). Add the amount of wastewater estimated to be contained in the soil with the amount of surface wastewater that was removed to achieve an estimated total amount of the wastewater spill.

Simple method to calculate soil moisture content:
Equipment needed: One coffee filter; a funnel; a graduated measuring cup; a jar or bottle. Place the coffee filter into the funnel. Place the funnel into the mouth of the jar or bottle. Place one cup of clean dry soil from the spill site onto the coffee filter. Pour one cup (8 ounces) of water onto the soil and allow the water to drain into the jar. Once the water has stopped dripping from the funnel, remove the funnel and measure the amount of water in the jar. The difference between the amount of water in the jar and the 8 ounces originally poured over the soil is the amount of moisture the soil retained.

Example: If six and one half ounces (6.5) remained in the jar, one and one half ounce (1.5) or 18.75% remained in the soil. The soil moisture content would be 18.75%.

Combo Truck or Vacuum Truck Recovery

When the spill is contained to a specific area and recovered by a combo or vacuum truck, the amount recovered can be used in calculating the amount of the original spill. If the spill is contained on a hard surface, estimate the total spill volume by what was captured by the combo or vacuum truck plus the amount that could not be captured. To estimate the amount not captured by the combo or vacuum truck, use the Measured Volume Method. For wet spots on concrete, use a depth of 0.0013 ft. or 1/64 inch. For wet stains on asphalt, use a depth of

0.0026 ft. or 1/32 inch. If the spill is contained on soil, use the Saturated Soils Method to determine how much of the spill soaked into the soil and add to the amount captured by the combo or vacuum truck.

Conversion Factors

1.0 cfs = .6463 mgd

One cubic foot of water (cf) = 7.48 gallons

One cubic foot of water per second (cfs) = 448.8 gallons per minute

A cylinder 1 foot in diameter and one foot deep = 5.87 gallons

A 1 square foot triangle 1 foot deep = 3.25 gallons

One inch or 1/12 ft = .083 feet

Volumes Recovered with Trucks or Pumped to Tanks

Level gauge on truck or

Known volume of the full tank or

Number of full tank trucks used during large SSO events

Use your agency's approved conversion factors, if available.

References

California Environmental Protection Agency

http://www.calepa.ca.gov/

State Water Resources Control Board

http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/

Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) Reduction Program

http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/sso/index.shtml

Sample Worksheet

_____
(City or Agency Name)

SSO Volume Estimation Worksheet

SSO Address/Location:_____ **Date:** _____

_____

SSO Volume Method of Estimation (check appropriate box and provide appropriate information for method used below)

Pictorial Reference Flow Rate Chart (San Diego Chart ☐ CWEA Ruler ☐)
Vent or Pick Holes ☐ Eyeball estimate ☐

Measured volume ☐ Counting Connections ☐ Manhole Ring ☐ Partially Covered Manhole ☐ Open Manhole ☐

Bucket Method ☐ Pipe Size Method ☐ Gutter Flow Method ☐ Metered Flow ☐
Rain Event Method ☐

Saturated Soils Method ☐ Combo/Vacuum Truck Recovery Method ☐

Spill Start Date: _____ Spill Start Time:_____

Spill End Date: _____ Spill End Time: _____ Total Est. Spill Volume (gal):_____

Provide a detailed description of the method(s) used to determine the SSO estimate. (Use additional sheets as needed)

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____