



Enforcement News

Los Angeles Water Board proposes \$21.7 million penalty for sewage spill at Hyperion facility

Unauthorized discharge, deficient monitoring among alleged violations

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LOS ANGELES – The City of Los Angeles, which owns and operates the Hyperion Treatment Plant in Playa del Rey, faces a proposed [\\$21.7 million penalty](#) in connection with the plant’s release of millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Pacific Ocean in July 2021.

This is the largest penalty the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board has ever proposed for violations of a waste discharge permit.

An investigation by the Los Angeles Water Board resulted in multiple allegations of permit violations, including unauthorized discharge and monitoring deficiencies, leading to today’s issuance of the Administrative Civil Liability Complaint.

The July 11-12 spill at the city’s oldest and largest wastewater treatment plant occurred when debris filtering machines, designed to remove plastic and large objects from incoming sewage, became clogged and inoperable, flooding the facility and forcing plant operators to evacuate for their own safety.

To prevent the flooding from impacting additional parts of the plant, the city’s sanitation and environment department released over 12 million gallons of untreated wastewater into Santa Monica Bay.

“This was a major incident, one of the largest spills in our region in decades,” said Hugh Marley, assistant executive officer of the Los Angeles Water Board. “The direct and associated impacts from the unauthorized discharge of millions of gallons of raw sewage into the ocean threatened the health of nearby communities, as well as fish and wildlife, and violated numerous environmental laws and regulations. The board prioritized its investigation of this matter, and the amount of the proposed penalty reflects the seriousness of the permit violations at the plant and the scale of the harm to our region.”

Short-term health impacts from the incident persisted for weeks, with residents complaining of skin rashes, headaches, nausea and noxious odors. The extent of the sewage spill also resulted in multiple beach closures.



State law requires the board to hear the complaint within 90 days unless the parties waive that requirement. Once scheduled, the board will announce the hearing date on its [website](#).

With over 10 million residents, the Los Angeles Water Board regulates the most densely populated region in the state, including the coastal watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura County and small portions of Kern and Santa Barbara counties. The California Water Boards' mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of the state's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use for present and future generations.