

2010 sewage spill may cost NTPUD \$232,100

By Kathryn Reed

North Tahoe Public Utility District may have to pay a penalty in excess of \$200,000 for allowing approximately 129,500 gallons of raw sewage to reach Lake Tahoe.

The sewage spill occurred Dec. 19, 2010, during a heavy snowstorm. The power went out on the main line and then the generator ran out of gas. No alarms were installed to let officials know the generator was not functioning properly.

By the time the ordeal was over, 500 gallons of sewage had filled a basement and surrounded the home in the Dollar Point area; while the bulk of the untreated sewage went into Lake Tahoe.

The Lahontan Water Quality Control Board is meeting July 12, with the fine on the agenda.

Doug Smith with Lahontan told *Lake Tahoe News* that NTPUD is "pointing the finger at one of their contractors."

He added, though, that the permit is in NTPUD's name, so it's the district's responsibility to follow the Porter Cologne Act, Lahontan's basin plan and the state permit.

"The permit requires they keep sewage in the pipe however they can make that happen," Smith said.

With the event occurring in winter, it did not impact any recreation activities. No one from the public complained, either.

However, the spill impacted lake clarity.

From the administrative civil liability attachment B, it says, "By contributing to the lake's overall nutrient load, it is reasonable to expect that the discharge also contributed to the degradation of clarity and color within Lake Tahoe as a whole, though the amount of degradation is not likely discernible due to the small added nutrient load compared to the lake's annual nutrient loading from all other sources."

Lahontan has recorded nine sewage spills from NTPUD of varying degrees from December 2007 through June 8, 2012.

The board on Thursday will decide if any penalty should be imposed and the amount. NTPUD will make its case and the public is allowed to comment, too.

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Note:

The meeting is July 12, 8:30am, 971 Silver Dollar Ave., South Lake Tahoe.