

Coburg Wastewater Project

Frequently Asked Questions - Hook-Up Update Fall 2013



Coburg Wastewater Project Phase II and III
(treatment facility & collection system)
Groundbreaking November 2011 at the Treatment
Facility Site

Stay Up-To-Date!

There is a lot of information, including fact sheets, engineering notes, and knowledgeable staff at City Hall. Come by 8-5p Mon.-Fri. to have your questions answered or report concerns. Project information can also be found in the City kiosk, at www.coburgoregon.org/?q=wastewater, on City of Coburg Facebook page, and in monthly utility bills.

How do you want to stay informed?

Over half of Coburg is hooked-up to the new Wastewater System. These FAQs address some of the common questions that Councilors, engineers, inspectors, or staff has heard during the final hook-up phase of the Project. There are also *general* FAQs available at City Hall, in the City kiosk, at www.coburgoregon.org/?q=wastewater, or will be mailed to you by request. Call 541-682-7850.

1. I'm hooked-up, but there are still rocks in my yard – when is this going to be finished?

Answer: The City and engineer has been asking the contractor, R & G Excavating (R & G) to finish the landscaping obligations on certain sites for months. It has been a point of serious contention with the contractor to the point of pre-litigation and discussions to terminate the contract. The City is obligated to honor the contract which enables the contractor to set their own schedule, method, and approach. Until now, the contractor approach has been to install as many tanks as possible before the weather gets wetter and finish landscaping a later time. The City's position is that it's completely unreasonable to expect homeowners to have their yards unfinished for weeks – regardless of what the contract allows. After weeks of legal process, this issue may be resolving itself. Affected homeowners should be expecting R & G to stop installing new tanks and to return to all of the 'hooked-up' properties and finish landscaping, repairs, and final testing. Per contract, R & G has not been paid for any unfinished residential site.





FAQs

2. I heard that the contractor has not been paid?

Answer: Per contract, R & G has not been paid for any unfinished residential site. R & G has not finished any one residential site and, therefore, has not been paid for more than materials and storage of equipment for those sites. R & G will not be paid for any unfinished site. There are many sites that they can complete whenever they choose. When a site is finished, they will promptly be paid for it. See question 1.

3. The wastewater alarm on my house went on. What do I do?

Answer: Push the (red) button on electrical box to turn off the alarm. Do not open the box. Do not disconnect anything. You could get hurt. Call R & G (24/7) at 503-508-7701. They are expected to return your call within a few hours and address the issue. At the end of the project, Public Works will be answering such calls. These alarms usually have to do with how the pump was programmed to react to levels inside the tank.



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4. If the contractor has not performed in some areas as expected, why not hire another one?

Answer: Public procurement and contracting is painfully complex for either side. It is difficult to amend or terminate a contract. There are several steps and a long process including discussions with all the funding agencies and formal legal procedures. The City's approach has been to try to work with the contractor on any and all field issues that arise. The City wants R & G to succeed because their success means a successful wastewater project for Coburg, but the City will pursue legal action when unsatisfactory work is revealed.

5. Is the project on time?

Answer: More tanks than expected have needed to be replaced. This has added some time to the overall project timeline – estimated at a month.

6. Is the project on budget?

Answer: Currently the project is on budget. If legal action needs to happen to terminate the contract with R & G, if significant winter weather affects productivity, or if project policies are changed, then, yes, the project will cost more.





FAQs

7. What are you doing for limited and low income households?

Answer: The City has a limited income assistance program for both water and wastewater. It is reviewed and adjusted annually by City Council. It is a voluntary program where the participants shall apply each year between May and June. There is also a donation program. Anyone may make a donation to the limited income assistance fund. All donations go directly to offsetting utility bills to the lowest income residents. Further, there are a number of current costs to property owners for septic that the City will take responsibility for including pumping and maintaining the tanks. If a tank needs to be replaced, the City will pay for that as well. See the *Cost Calculator* fact sheet.

7. What is the contractor responsible for?

Answer: R & G Excavating was the lowest qualified bidder for the ‘hook-up’ phase of the project. The City was legally bound to contract the work with them. R & G is responsible for their approach, schedule, and directing their crews where and when to work. They are responsible for their sub-contractors including Builders Electric who is installing the electrical pieces. The electrical contractor is usually the first contact with the property owner. They install the electrical panel to the *outside* of the house and to your tank. R & G will install your tank, pump, and pipe. They are required to provide you a written 2-week notice before they start work. They are also required to provide you a 2-day notice. **Please take this opportunity to contact R & G and coordinate the placement of your tank.** If you do not contact them, they



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assume that you have no questions and will complete the work per their schedule. Once the work is complete, adjustments are not made because it is very expensive to the Project to redo the work. (An exception would be if negligence is involved).

3. Will the Wastewater Project fix the groundwater contamination problem?

Answer: We do not know for certain how much the City’s septic tanks have been contributing the pollution problem. There are two major sources of nitrates in the groundwater. One is from agriculture – from fertilizers and from farm animals. The second is human waste. Well tests upstream of the City show lower nitrate levels. Due to the number of tanks that have been replaced due to leakage thus far, it is reasonably likely that the Project will have a greater impact on environmental quality that originally estimated.

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