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## **Miller Park toilets flush into river, lake**

### **Dye test confirms bad connection of storm, sanitary sewers at stadium**

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At least one sanitary sewer at Miller Park is misconnected to a storm sewer, allowing untreated human waste to flow directly into the Menomonee River and downstream to Lake Michigan, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District officials said Tuesday.

Green dye flowing out of a storm sewer on the Menomonee River confirmed at least one misconnection between a sanitary sewer from Miller Park and storm sewer lines draining from stadium parking lots less than three weeks before 40,000 fans arrive for opening day.

The improper connection allows human fecal bacteria from bathrooms on the northeast corner of the stadium to flow into the river.

One or more of the sanitary sewer pipes coming from that corner of the stadium likely was connected inadvertently to a storm sewer during Miller Park's construction, said Peter Topczewski, the sewerage district's water quality protection manager.

The dye was first seen about 10:20 a.m. Tuesday in a storm sewer line beneath an access road northeast of the stadium, he said. Before that time, the dye had been poured into sinks inside a Milwaukee Police Department office in the basement and a private suite on the third level.

The sequence of testing indicates that the sanitary pipe coming off the suite level on the northeast side of the stadium is the problem, according to Topczewski and Mike Duckett, executive director of the Miller Park stadium district.

By noon Tuesday, the dye was seen flowing out of the storm sewer pipe that discharges to the river east of the stadium and south of I-94.

An MMSD crew returned to the stadium and repeated the test, pouring dye into a bathroom sink in a third-level suite. The dye again came out in the storm sewer, Topczewski said.

## Tainted water samples

The dye study of sewers at Miller Park was done in response to tests last year of storm water samples collected from the discharge pipe at the river. Each of 12 samples tested positive for the genetic marker for a human fecal bacteria, indicating that sanitary sewers were discharging to the storm sewer.

"I'm glad we're starting to nail down a cause," Duckett said. "We'll be meeting with the Brewers in the next few days and decide how to fix this."

He said his goal is to locate the misconnection quickly so that repair work could be completed before opening day, April 2.

Duckett informed the stadium district board of directors of the dye study's findings at a previously scheduled meeting Tuesday afternoon.

Sewers at Miller Park are the responsibility of the stadium district. Repairs could include uncovering misconnected sewers beneath a parking lot or street.

Duckett added that the problem could have been created during the construction of Miller Park, or it might be a problem connected with laterals that were built for County Stadium.

Built in 1953, County Stadium was razed when Miller Park opened in 2001.

Tuesday's dye study began shortly after 8 a.m. The red-orange dye poured into sinks and sanitary sewer lines turns green when it mixes with water.

Testing for possible sewer misconnections was done first at a former construction trailer owned by MMSD and a City of Milwaukee building, both located east of city water storage tanks that are south of I-94 and immediately east of U.S. Highway 41. No dye was seen in storm sewers after it was poured into sinks inside those buildings.

Dye poured into a sanitary line coming from Helfaer Field, a youth baseball field adjacent to Miller Park, was not flushed into a storm sewer.

"We're done here," Topczewski said shortly after 1 p.m. "Our purpose was to verify the problem. We confirmed one cross-connection."

Now, plumbers working for the Brewers or a contractor to be hired by the stadium district should check each sanitary connection between the stadium and street sewers with dye or closed-circuit television, Topczewski said. The problem could extend beyond one sanitary line on the northeast corner, he said.

Storm water testing in 2005 and 2006 found the genetic marker for human fecal bacteria in more than 50% of samples taken from 18 other municipal and private storm sewers, in addition to Miller Park. That specific bacteria could come only from sanitary sewers.

The list of other storm sewers testing positive for the marker include Lake Michigan shoreline pipes at Big Bay Park in Whitefish Bay and Bay View Park, a pipe downstream from State Fair Park discharging to Honey Creek, as well as one on Lincoln Creek and several others on Honey and Underwood creeks and the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic rivers.

The genetic marker tests were done by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Great Lakes WATER Institute under a contract with MMSD. The contract recently was extended for two years, and the investigation will be expanded to include storm sewers along the Milwaukee River.

*Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.*

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