

NY-ALERT REPORTS

Frequently Asked Questions



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

How do I sign up for NY-Alert

Quick Sign-up Instructions

1. Go to www.nyalert.gov/
2. Click on "Sign Up for NY-Alerts" in left navigation column.
3. Click the "Enroll" button.
4. Enter your information and click "Create Account."
5. Follow the directions from NY-Alert to confirm your account and set up your personal notification profile.
6. Click the "Add Additional Alerts" button.
7. Click the "Customized Notification" button.
8. Select the "Environmental" warning category to receive for sewage spill alerts.

For more information about NY-Alert visit www.nyalert.gov/.

The following questions are related to what you will see when you read a NY-Alert Report.

What reports will I receive after I sign up?

You will receive reports of sewage spills that reach surface water for the areas of New York State (jurisdictions) that you sign up for. All discharges reported to DEC are posted on the Sewage Discharge Reports page of the DEC website www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/90321.html.

Is it OK to recreate (swim, boat, fish) on a waterbody with an active alert?

Based on the NY-Alert information, the Department of Health may issue public water supply advisories and beach closures.

Waterbodies with active alerts may contain untreated or partially treated sewage that can contain bacteria and other microorganisms that can cause illness.

Visit DEC's swimming page (www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/96801.html) for resources to help you make informed decisions about places to swim, boat and fish.

How do I tell where the spill occurred if I receive a text message?

The headline should read "county, city/town/village, sewage discharge, any publically impacted areas, name of waterbody." Click on the link in the text message to see the full alert in NY-Alert.

The report headline includes the word "UPDATED". What does this mean?

The facility has made some changes to the report since it was first issued. Please check the "Additional Instructions" section of the alert to see what has changed.

How do I know if the discharge is from a POTW or POSS?

The POTW number starts with NY0##### and a POSS number starts with NYS#####.

Why does it say ongoing?

This indicates that the spill has not ended. Spills that continue while the problem is being fixed have an estimated end time. The regulations require that a final report be submitted once the spill has ended.

What is the difference between “Man-made Structure” and “Overland Flow”?

Examples of “man-made structures” include: pipes, manholes, ditch/swale, or pump station overflow. “Overland flow” is the flow of sewage over ground into the receiving waterbody.

How do I know what public areas may be impacted by a discharge?

The facility provides information about public areas that might be impacted, to the best of their knowledge, in the “Impacted Public Areas” section of the Alert message.

Why is the volume estimated?

Facilities do not have the tools to measure the volume or rate at the time of a spill. Facility staff use their best professional judgment to estimate the flow rate or volume of the discharge at the time of reporting.

Where can I find the spill data?

Recent NY-Alert sewage spill notifications are posted on www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/101187.html.

I am looking at DEC’s spill incidents database and I can’t find any sewage spills.

The Spill Incident database is for other types of spills. Sewage discharges are posted on www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/90321.html.

Prepared: July 2015