

Sewer line repairs holding

By TOM LONERGAN

Temporary measures include: three pipes installed inside the damaged 300-foot section of the sewer line; the ground over the damaged area has been frozen with liquid nitrogen and abrine solution; wells are being installed in the area to de-water the ground.

Temporary repairs to the crumbling sewer line near the Oakland and Macomb County border should prevent any service interruptions for the 300,000 residents affected, according to an Oakland County official.

"Things are probably in pretty good shape right now," said Donald Ringler, the county DPW's sewer and water manager. Ringler attended a two-hour closed meeting last week with Detroit officials on the status of the Oakland-Macomb interceptor sewer.

"They (Detroit Water and Sewerage Department officials) don't expect any interruption of service," said Ringler, who agreed that service cutbacks are "very remote."

CRUMBLING in the sewer line — which carries sewage from northeastern Oakland (including Avon Township and part of West Bloomfield Township) and southwestern Macomb to the Detroit sewage treatment plant — was discovered in late January.

Before smaller auxiliary sewer lines were installed in the damaged pipe earlier this month, DWSJ was considering diverting sewage into the Clinton River and Lake St. Clair.

Officials from Oakland and Macomb counties were told last week, however, that it will be unnecessary to divert sewage into area waters. Health officials from each county and Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials also attended the meeting.

Ringler said Macomb County has retained a private engineering firm from Baltimore to investigate the trouble-plagued sewer interceptor. A different Macomb County portion of the same sewer line collapsed in July 1976, and raw sewage was pumped into Lake St. Clair.

Ringler said Oakland County has not joined with Macomb in hiring the Baltimore firm but may consider doing so later this week.

SO FAR, Detroit officials have been mum on the cost of both temporary and permanent repairs.

"We attempted to get an estimate out of Detroit," said Ringler. "But they would give us none or did not have one at this time."

These temporary measures have been taken, Ringler said.

Three pipes have been installed inside the damaged 300-foot section of the sewer line, which is 60 feet underground. These temporary steel casing

pipes permit sewage to flow through the damaged line.

The ground over the damaged area has been frozen with liquid nitrogen and abrine solution.

Wells are being installed in the area to de-water the ground.

A BYPASS system to remove the flow from the damaged 12-foot diameter pipe may be completed by mid-April, according to Ringler. Work has started on the bypass pipes and a temporary pumping station.

Once the flow is removed from the damaged interceptor, the DWSJ's hired contractors can get inside the pipe and figure out why it crumbled, Ringler said.

Suburban officials have been critical of Detroit's choice of contractors for the sewer repair. The primary contractor, Walbridge Aldinger Co., of Detroit, retained the Michigan Sewer Construction Co., of Southfield, which built the sewer during the early 1970s.

DWSJ is planning to hire its own "independent expert" to investigate. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is also expected to investigate once the temporary repairs are made.

Regarding the investigations, Ringler said, "I don't think there's anything really concrete yet."

Ringler was one of a few officials allowed on the site of the damaged interceptor south of 15 Mile Road in Sterling Heights.

But Ringler says he hasn't visited the site recently.

There isn't a helluva lot you can see out there other than a lot of people and a lot of equipment."



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