



Working For You



The Cure for Pollution Doesn't Come in Pill Form

Danielle Piper, Environmental Technician

Once you've poured something down the drain or flushed it away, you never have to worry about it again, right? In a recent study by the U.S. Geological Survey of 139 water bodies in 30 states, 80% were shown to contain traces of pharmaceuticals. Water pollution comes in many forms, but the improper disposal of medications and sharps may prove to be one of the most detrimental. For years, people were advised to flush expired or excess medications down the toilet, but we now realize we were sacrificing our water quality for this "convenience".

Wastewater treatment plants are designed to filter impurities from water which is released back into the environment after treatment. **Unfortunately, there are no facilities with the ability to filter out pharmaceuticals.** Medications enter the environment after processing by our bodies and through improper disposal methods. To help minimize the impact on the environment, we are encouraging residents to contact their local pharmacies to find out if they will accept their unwanted medications for proper disposal.

If your pharmacy lacks a medication disposal program, they can be thrown away if first crushed or dissolved in water then mixed with glue, old coffee grounds, or cat litter before being placed in a sealed container (preferably the original container they came in) with all labels removed. **The biggest risk involved with tossing out unwanted medications yourself is the possibility of pets or children finding them in the trash, so it is important that you make the medications as undesirable as possible before disposal.** Certain medications, especially narcotics or those listed as controlled substances, must still be flushed. Check out <http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/schedules/alpha/alphabetical.htm> for a complete list of these exact items.



The general term, "sharps," includes hypodermic needles, medical lancets, and razor blades. Personal units which destroy needles can be purchased by people with conditions which require self-injections, or you can contact your local hospital regarding free sharps disposal in your area. **Around 3,000 sanitation workers are injured every year by punctures or cuts from sharps disposed of in the trash.** More find their way out of the garbage and into the environment where children and pets may encounter them.

South Florida Baptist in Plant City offers free containers deemed safe for used sharps storage. Once it's filled, simply return the container to the hospital for an empty one. **One in twelve households has an occupant dependent on the use of sharps to help maintain their health.** Almost every household has a cabinet or drawer containing medicinal items for family members or pets. Let's try and keep unwanted pharmaceuticals and sharps out of the environment and off our streets. **Proper disposal of these items will help keep our communities and water resources safe!**

Subscription Announcement



In an effort to reduce costs and save some trees, we've decided to make this newsletter mostly available in electronic form. A printed copy may be obtained by request by calling 813-757-9289 x 2249, or the newsletter may be picked up at the Billing Department of City Hall. Please email Shawna Everidge at severidge@plantcitygov.com if you would like to be added to our e-mailing list.

You'll be the first to know of major projects, giveaways, contests and more!

Catching up With the Utilities Operations Division...

Operation of the Water Reclamation Facility and Drinking Water Systems

Steve Saffels, Permit Compliance Coordinator

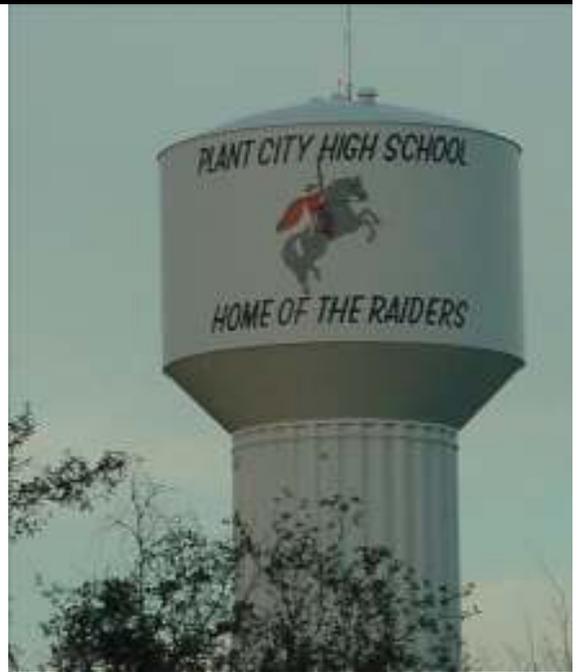
This has been a busy year for the Operations Division. In February of 2008, we started up the new \$54 million wastewater treatment system and reclaimed water production facility. This was a challenging time for the operations personnel with the learning of the new process for treating the wastewater, all the new control systems, and cultivating the bacteria used to treat the wastewater to the new system.

The distribution system for the reclaimed water has been expanded from the facility to the east of Plant City for irrigation of the City's parks and future development on that side of town. The reclaimed water is currently being used to irrigate the new Plant City Tennis Center. We are also in the designing stage of expanding the reclaimed water system to include the Walden Lake Golf & Country Club and future development to the south.

During 2008, we also completed tri-annual drinking water sampling. Parameters sampled included analysis of Primary and Secondary Drinking Water Standards, Primary Inorganic Contaminants, Radiochemical, Synthetic Organic Contaminants and Volatile Organic Contaminants. All parameters tested were in compliance with the Maximum Contaminants Level set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. A full report will be sent in your water bill in the next couple of months.

In 2009 we are resuming the planning, permitting and construction of a new drinking water plant. The well has already been drilled and the facility is in the design process. This well is planned to be in production by the summer of 2010.

The projects have prepared Plant City for future growth, and provided us with the ability to meet today's stringent environmental standards.



Above: Well 8, featuring the PCHS Raider, was painted in 2004 after various community groups raised the funds.

Your chance to win!

The Strawberry Festival is right around the corner, and Public Works is preparing for the additional traffic, refuse and water usage. So... we've got **three FREE Parkesdale Strawberry Shortcake** (yum!) certificates for the winner of this question:

How many pounds of garbage will the Sanitation Division collect during the Strawberry Festival?

It's like counting the jelly beans in a jar, only better because I've just learned that the correct answer will also win an outdoor water conservation kit in honor of **APRIL** being **Water Conservation Month** from our Water Conservation Program.

Take a guess! Email severidge@plantcitygov.com or write Shawna Everidge, 1802 Spooner Drive, Plant City, FL 33563.

Cutting Back...

In the July issue, we'll cover some of the ways the Public Works Department has worked to conserve resources and reduce spending. We'd also like to publish your ideas for making due during these more conservative times. Are you saving energy? Stretching your food budget? Reusing anything that you might otherwise have tossed? Growing a vegetable garden? Please share your stories with us by emailing severidge@plantcitygov.com or snail mail Shawna Everidge, 1802 Spooner Drive, Plant City, FL 33563. **We'd love to hear from you!**

It's a drought.
Conserve!
Learn how at
WaterMatters.org