

KENNETH J. LUCIANIN
Commissioner



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"Message from the Executive Director"

In the eight months since Superstorm Sandy ravaged our facility, we have seen significant progress at the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission (PVSC).

I'm pleased to report that through the hard work of so many dedicated men and women, we have made great strides in bringing the plant back to normal operations. Although there is still much work to be completed – both with repairs, reconstruction, and necessary upgrades to the physical plant – we have nonetheless seen a number of major improvements this spring. Let me detail the latest developments:

First, PVSC staff has been hard at work cleaning, rebuilding and replacing countless fixtures throughout the plant. During the recovery period from Sandy, PVSC employees and supervisors have done yeoman's work in continuing to manage, maintain and provide operational service 24 hours a day – each and every day – under very difficult conditions. I want to personally thank and congratulate those who immediately after the storm, devised and implemented a tactical plan to dewater the flooded tunnels and basements at PVSC, and then quickly transitioned to the rebuilding efforts.

When a wall of water came crashing through the treatment plant, it flooded all of the mile long equipment tunnel, submerging all critical infrastructure including mechanical, electrical and instrumentation equipment located on the basement levels of several facilities. Coupled with the loss of PSE&G electrical service for over 2 ½ days, this rendered the treatment plant inoperable.

During the weeks and months since the Superstorm, PVSC staff has tackled everything from cleaning, disinfecting, disassembling, inspecting and repairing electrical Substations, to replacing thousands of linear feet of electrical cables and control wiring severely damaged by salt water. PVSC staff also has worked hard at bringing the laboratory, computer systems, and many other critical functions back online. Because of their hard work, many operating systems have been returned to service.

Second, PVSC also continues to work with FEMA on the completion and submission of Project Worksheets. We currently have 14 FEMA, contractor specialists and Subject Matter Experts (SME's) -- including Structural, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineers – assisting us with assessing the significant damage sustained from Superstorm Sandy. To date, 43 project worksheets (PWs) have been identified for PVSC. 30 PWs are in the FEMA system. 24 of these have been obligated, which means that the money eligible to PVSC has or will be sent to the State of NJ for allocation at a future date.

As you know, all Post-Sandy recovery and rebuilding facilities in the state are now under revised Base Flood Elevation Maps provided by FEMA. In order to receive "Mitigation Funds," these new elevations must be taken into consideration when preparing the final plans. PVSC is currently using the new maps as part of our recovery mitigation planning efforts. To cover the mitigation plans, we have submitted to FEMA several letters of intent requesting grants totaling \$779 million.

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Finally, in January, PVSC received nearly \$15 million in storm grant money from FEMA to reimburse the authority for costs incurred for interim repairs and sludge shipping costs. It was recently announced that PVSC will also be receiving a \$1 million federal grant to help it restore critical documents that were damaged. Further, the U.S. EPA recently unveiled a program that will provide grants of \$229 million to the state of New Jersey for improvements to wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities impacted by Superstorm Sandy. The money will also be used for green infrastructure projects, such as retention basins and rain gardens that can cut down on the storm runoff that often causes older sewer systems to overflow into local rivers and bays.

This announcement by the EPA is encouraging news and recognition that wastewater treatment plants need these additional funds to recover from Sandy's devastation, rebuild our infrastructure and reduce the risks of flood damage in the future as a result of severe storms. Obviously, the PVSC will be pursuing this program and all viable avenues for funding assistance, as more details become available.

As we continue to rebuild our important and sensitive infrastructure after Sandy, our goal is to get ahead of the problem and do so in a way that's smarter and more resilient to the effects of extreme and violent weather.

In the coming weeks and months, look to the PVSC for more important developments on the restoration of our plant. The PVSC has done a remarkable job in recovering from the largest storm in the state's history and is the reason we retain our place as one of the most efficient wastewater treatment facilities in the world.

Thank you,
Mike DeFrancisci, Executive Director