



Five Years After Sandy

PVSC Is The Model Of Resiliency And Recovery

It has been five years since Superstorm Sandy slammed into New Jersey, inflicting catastrophic and unparalleled damages which in turn necessitated billions of dollars in repairs.

Since the storm, New Jerseyans have seen overwhelming evidence that our state truly was and is “stronger than the storm,” a slogan that became post-storm New Jersey’s rallying cry and a statement of courage and resolve.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission was much like the rest of the state – devastated.

Our 140-acre plant, situated near the confluence of the Passaic River and Newark Bay, was entirely engulfed by flood waters during the course of the storm.

This resulted in the inundation of PVSC’s 5,000-foot underground utility tunnels with more than 200 million gallons of combined bay, rain and wastewater, which destroyed much of PVSC’s critical process equipment.

Five years after the storm, PVSC is the model of recovery and resiliency. Indeed, through hard work, unwavering determination, and collaborative vision, PVSC has come back stronger and more unified than ever before.

This is a tribute to PVSC’s excellent employees, who have met significant challenges head-on and persevered.

Meanwhile, our outstanding Board of Commissioners and senior management team have provided invaluable leadership as the agency continues to rebuild and modernize, while remaining extremely responsive to its contributing municipalities and ratepayers.

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The agency has finalized plans for the construction of two permanent flood walls to protect the east and west sides of the plant as part of a \$500 million FEMA-funded (90% funded by FEMA) resiliency/plant hardening program that was approved in 2015.

In addition to the walls, the plans include:

- Construction of a 34-megawatt on-site standby power plant
- The plant-wide replacement and relocation of switchgear and motor control centers
- The plant-wide replacement of electrical cables and utility tunnel bulkheads
- The construction of storm water pumping stations
- Construction of and upgrades to PVSC's storm water collection system
- The construction of east/west electrical substations



The need for such a robust resiliency plan is obvious. Severe storms are a growing threat and the incidence of weather-related, large-scale disasters around the country has climbed steadily and drastically in the last decade, with the greatest spikes coming since Superstorm Sandy.

The last two months, tragically, serve as reminders of those facts. Hurricane Harvey plowed into Texas in late August. Next up was Hurricane Irma, which barreled through Florida in September.



Together, these storms caused more damage than Hurricane Katrina, according to several early estimates.

In both storms, there was massive flooding, major power outages, destroyed homes, and ruined transportation infrastructures and systems.

Not surprisingly, Harvey and Irma also flooded and badly damaged sewer systems and wastewater treatment plants.

However, combatting such severe storms is hardly PVSC's only responsibility. While addressing storm-related concerns, PVSC continues to effectively and efficiently operate the fifth largest wastewater treatment plant in the United States.

PVSC also continues to fulfill its role as good environmental stewards by consistently removing debris and other polluting matter from Newark Bay, the Passaic River and its tributaries.

All the while, PVSC has continued to conduct its critical operations while charging user charges to its ratepayers that are well below the national average and, indeed, among the lowest in the United States.

