



WEST COAST CORRECTIONS CAMPUS FINDS ALTERNATIVE TO ENVIRONMENTAL FINES

BACKGROUND

The California Men's Colony (CMC) is a state prison located northwest of the city of San Luis Obispo, along the central California coast approximately halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

With two separate facilities sharing the 356-acre campus, CMC is an important part of the local coastal community, with a commitment to helping preserve the sensitive areas within the surrounding environment.

However, with both CMC facilities built in 1954 and 1961, the aging sewer system can be difficult to manage, monitor and maintain.

Of particular concern is the nearby Chorro Creek, which is the largest waterway feeding Morro Bay. The creek begins in the hills behind CMC, then flows under Highway 1 through nearby Camp SLO and behind Cuesta College, then runs west along Highway 1 to Morro Bay.

THE CHALLENGE

Over the years, there have been a number of sporadic, unplanned spills from the CMC facility due to issues such as I&I and particular challenges associated with unauthorized debris from inmates going into the system.

After a spill of approximately 33,000 gallons in November 2019, the Regional Water Quality Board decided to impose fines along with

a consent decree regarding additional sanctions for any future spills.

THE SOLUTION

After reviewing the alternatives, CMC staff proposed using SmartCover to improve real-time monitoring of sewer conditions and predictive capability to manage I&I issues before they result in spills.

Under a contract signed with the Regional Water Quality Board, CMC agreed to an Enhanced Compliance Action (ECA) stipulating a proactive monitoring and management plan with a series of specific milestones and implementation steps.

CMC staff identified 13 locations in the sewer system as key problem areas that would most benefit from real-time monitoring. SmartCovers were quickly installed as per the stipulated schedule at these sites during July and August 2020.

Almost immediately after receiving training with SmartCover, CMC staff began to identify emergent issues within the sewer system, which enabled them to take proactive corrective actions to prevent spills.



FINES AND SANCTIONS HAVE NO ROI, BUT SMART SEWERS DELIVER BIG SAVINGS

COST AVOIDANCE

SmartCover has transformed CMC's ability to monitor and manage the facility's aging sewer system, thereby avoiding big fines from the regional water board and forestalling the need for huge capital expenditures.

"We needed to target our limited budget on things that can make a real difference. Our relatively small investment in SmartCover helped avoid huge fines and prevent spills."

-- Scott Buffaloe, Correctional Plant Manager, CMC

With a well-managed investment in a SmartCover system, the CMC was able to swiftly contain their sewer spill situation. As a result, they have avoided consequential fines that could have overwhelmed their available budget and ultimately wouldn't have made any tangible improvements to the system. CMC's instant infrastructure enhancements have led to immediate ROI evidence with operational improvements and prevention of spills that could potentially result in regulatory sanctions.

IMPROVED MANAGEMENT

According to Scott Buffaloe, Correctional Plant Manager, "SmartCover had additional benefits in terms of improving our notification and response processes. The real-time availability of rich data, coupled with SmartCover software, enabled us to significantly enhance how we respond to emergent issues."

For example, shortly after SmartCover installation, the enhanced notification processes alerted CMC staff to a potential problem with a rapid buildup of plastic in the system from inmates disposing of unauthorized items during Covid lockdowns. Staff plumbers were able to immediately respond and correct the problem before it escalated into causing a major spill.

SUMMARY

As with many government facilities, academic institutions, and private company campuses, the California Men's Colony is like a small city, with significant sewer infrastructures and risk of spills that could impact the surrounding communities.

Just as cities have learned the value of real-time monitoring and data-driven sewer management, other forward-looking entities such as CMC are leveraging SmartCover to achieve similar benefits.

"With SmartCover, we have empowered our staff with new real-time insights into what's happening in the system. That enables us to both save money and to protect the surrounding community from spills."

-- California Men's Colony