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## Cary sewage spill closes road

Part of Holly Springs Road is closed; lakes remain shut to boating, swimming and fishing

DAVID BRACKEN, Staff Writer

Cary officials said Sunday that heavy rains and ongoing construction at a pumping station were to blame for a spill that has dumped millions of gallons of untreated sewage into Swift Creek.

The spill caused Raleigh officials on Saturday to close Lake Wheeler and Lake Benson to boating, swimming and fishing until further notice while bacteria tests are conducted. Donna Jackson, Raleigh's assistant public utilities director, said Sunday she expects to receive those test results today.

Rob Bonne, Cary's utility director, said a pipe dislodged Friday evening about 7:30 p.m. after an excavation site at its Swift Creek pumping station caved in. The broken pipe forced officials to shut down the station, which handles about 5 million gallons of waste on an average day.

Cary officials estimate as much



Town of Cary employees pump sewage from a manhole into a tanker truck along Lilly Atkins Road.

*Staff Photos by Sher Stoneman*

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as 3 million gallons of untreated waste may have entered Swift Creek over the next 15 hours as engineers struggled to fix the problem.

By Saturday night, engineers had begun setting up a temporary system to prevent sewage from reaching Swift Creek. They began rerouting the sewage from manholes located upstream from the pumping station. The sewage was being diverted to 6,500-gallon tanker trucks, which hauled it downstream to where it could re-enter the sewer system and flow to the South Cary sewage treatment plant.

The system had expanded to include 16 tanker trucks by Sunday night, with an empty tanker arriving every 10 minutes to haul away sewage.

"It's almost like they're air traffic controllers out there," Bonne said.

The operation caused the closure of Holly Springs Road between Lilly Atkins Road and High Ridge Drive until the trucks are no longer needed. Holly Springs Road also was closed to through traffic from Cary Parkway to Penny Road.

Cary engineers are working with contractors to figure out how to reconnect the pipe, but officials said it could be the middle of the week before repairs are completed. Bonne said the soil around the embankment is so unstable that engineers are planning to hammer concrete or steel pilings into the ground to provide a place for the pipe to lean against.

## Construction site

Cary is spending about \$5 million to increase the capacity of its Swift Creek station from 8 million to 16 million gallons a day. The

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14-month project was expected to be completed this fall. The hole that collapsed is where a second underground sewage storage tank is to be located. The bottom of the tank will sit 60 feet below ground.

Bonne said the excavation site had been lined with concrete and was approved by officials from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. He said contractors didn't expect the ground would become so saturated with rain.

"Contractors, they bid on projects to make a profit," he said. "They don't expect a 100-year record rain is going to occur."

Raleigh has received more than 9 inches of rain this month, including more than 7 inches June 14 when Tropical Storm Alberto swept through the region.

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