

Syracuse University receives two water quality awards

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Syracuse University's Steam Station and Chilled Water Plant have been recognized for protecting local waterways from pollutants by carefully managing wastewater discharges. Both plants received an Onondaga County Industrial Achievement Award for maintaining 100 percent compliance with their Onondaga County Industrial Wastewater Discharge Permits during 2011.

This is the 11th time the Chilled Water Plant has received the award, and the first time for the Steam Station since SU took over operations from an outside vendor in late 2009.

The county's Department of Water Environment Protection (WEP), along with Onondaga County Executive Joanne Mahoney, presented the awards during a recent ceremony at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park. A total of 40 industrial achievement awards were given this year.

"We work extremely hard to ensure that our wastewater discharges into the county's sewer system are in full compliance," says Tom Reddinger, SU's director of Steam Operations. "Getting the Steam Station to be in full compliance in just over a year was a great accomplishment. I'm very pleased that our dedicated staff, along with excellent support from SU's Environmental Health and Safety Services, has been so committed to lessening the University's environmental impact."

While employees at the Steam Station and Chilled Water Plant have the hands-on responsibility of keeping pollutants out of wastewater discharges, tracking and reporting these activities are equally important and demanding. That's where SU's Environmental Health and Safety Services (EHSS) comes in.

"Twice a year wastewater samples are taken by the Steam Station and Chilled Water Plant to verify compliance," says Becky Ponza, environmental compliance manager with the EHSS office. "We submit that information, along with semiannual self-monitoring reports, to the county. The commitment and cooperation from the plant's team in maintaining compliance with wastewater and numerous other environmental regulations is a huge asset to the EHSS office and the University."

The wastewater discharge permit defines the conditions, limitations and requirements of permit holders' discharges into the county's sanitary sewer system. A system of periodic reporting, self-monitoring and facility visits by WEP officials ensures that permit holders are complying with the discharge limitations and determines the award recipients each year. This was the 15th year of the Onondaga County Industrial Achievement Awards.

