



Joint Meeting News

Food Scrap Collector Generates Renewable Energy in New Jersey

Did you know that food waste can be turned into renewable energy? The power generated by the methane gas captured from micro-organisms at the Joint Meeting of Essex and Union Counties wastewater treatment plant in New Jersey, part of the “food” the bugs digest is collected from grease traps at Rutgers University. Known as FOG (fats, oils and grease), the byproduct is collected by an industrial waste management company, carted from university dining halls, offloaded at the treatment plant, and served to millions microscopic critters. The process has large environmental and economic impacts. In a big industrial kitchen, Rutgers is serving thousands of meals for the university. All of the food prep, the cleaning of plates and dishes, comes through their sinks, makes their way into a trap. In the wash water that comes out is fats, oils and grease, things that you don’t want to get into your sewer because when that makes its way into your sewer, you end up clogging up sewer pipes, much like an artery would. You choke off the flow and you get sewer backups. The food waste sinks to the bottom of the trap, the fat and the oil floats to the top, and the relatively clean water makes it way out to the sewer, so they’re removing the separated grease and food waste that settled in the trap and didn’t make its way out to the sewer. For 10 years, Russell Reid has collected FOG at Rutgers and about 1,000 other locations throughout North and Central Jersey and brought the messy goop either to a wastewater treatment plant. They too feed the waste to bugs and generate renewable energy from their methane, which also is produced from their feasting on waste water sludge. That gas is captured by digesters that feed into a filtering system that converts the raw methane into reusable natural gas, as well as electricity that is sent to a power distribution operation connected to nearby power lines. The fuel powers the plant’s three 800-kilowatt generators, creating up to 3.2 megawatts of electricity.

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If you're looking for a green alternative to a commercial garbage disposal, consider installing The Drain Strainer. Invented by a former restaurant owner, The Drain Strainer is a food scrap collector that keeps your grease trap from getting clogged with food solids. The food waste can be disposed of or saved for compost or even turned into renewable energy.

Hurricane Sandy

On the evening of October 29, 2012 Hurricane Sandy made landfall affecting the area where the Joint Meeting wastewater treatment facility is located. Despite adverse weather conditions, the unprecedented storm surge and the simultaneous occurrence of the astronomical high tide the Joint Meeting facility treated all of the raw sewage that entered the facility during the storm period. Not a single treatment tank overflowed even though waters from the Elizabeth River and the Arthur Kill began flowing into some of the tanks. Although there was an outage of PSEG power for several days the treatment facility continued to operate on electrical power produced by the onsite Cogeneration Facility - the facility never shutdown except for a very brief period of time that it took to start up the onsite generators. Some flooding of buildings occurred at the height of the storm. Damage assessments were initiated the next day following the storm. Repairs were also immediately started once the damages were identified. The Joint Meeting staff has been extremely diligent in repairing those portions of the plant that were adversely affected by Sandy.

Weathering the Storm--The Joint Meeting



As a final note, there were no NJPDES permit violations that occurred during or after the passage of the storm. This is to the credit of the JM staff that were present through the entire storm and afterwards. Many employees remained at the plant site for more than 24 hours and made every effort possible to report for duty. They did a remarkable job in adapting to changing weather conditions and the impacts on the treatment facility.

Newsletters

A few times a year we put out a newsletter for our employees and interested public. In these newsletters we list achievements and news pertaining to our wastewater treatment plant, collection system and employees. Please note that [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) is required to view our newsletters, which is available free for download.

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