8. SEWER AND STORM DRAIN CONNECTIONS – The S-Permit

8.1 S-Permit Description and Purpose

The sewage from a building is carried through the building’s sewer pipe to the property line. At the property line, the building’s sewer pipe is connected to a 6-inch house connection sewer (also known as a lateral connection or service connection), which carries the sewage to a local mainline sewer line (usually an 8-inch clay pipe under the middle of the street). Collector and interceptor sewers collect the sewage from local sewers and carry it to an outfall sewer. Outfall sewers are very large pipes, sometimes up to 10 feet in diameter. These pipes carry the sewage to the treatment plants. At the treatment plants, solids are separated from the water. After treating the water, it is discharged into the ocean, used for irrigation, or pumped back into the ground.

To connect to the City of Los Angeles Sewer System, a property owner shall obtain a Sewerage Facilities Charge (SFC)/Bonded Sewer Fee Certificate and a Sewer Permit from the appropriate district office.

Storm Drain connections are made from the property line to a catch basin or a storm drain pipe in the public right-of-way. The storm water is collected in area drains on private property. The area drains may be connected to the storm drain connection pipe at the property line.

The Department of Public Works requires a Sewer Permit (S-Permit) for a new connection of a property’s sewer line to the City’s sewer system or the repair of an existing connection. The Bureau of Engineering (BOE) issues the S-Permit over-the-counter. Please contact the appropriate district office to complete the application for the S-Permit. Before the S-Permit is issued for a new house connection sewer, the SFC and Bonded Sewer Fees, if applicable, must be paid then the SFC Certificate will be issued for the property.

Sewerage Facilities Charge (SFC) or Sewer Certificate – This charge is basically your share of the cost of design and construction of the all sewer facilities (local, collector, interceptor, outfall sewers and treatment plants). According to Section 64.11.2 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, this charge became effective on June 17, 1970. All buildings built before this date are “grandfathered in” and did not pay this charge. This charge is collected at the time of processing a building permit application for a new building, addition to an existing building, and/or a change of use of the existing building. Credit will be given to those properties with a demolition permit on or after June 17, 1970.

This charge depends upon the usage of a property, for example: residential, commercial, etc., and the area of the building. If the use and area increase then additional fees are collected. If the use and area decrease then a credit remains
with the property and will be applied toward future development of the property. In case of industrial use, this credit may be transferred to another property of the same use. Upon receipt of these charges a Sewer Certificate is issued that indicates the address, legal description, usage, area of the building, and amount of fee charged or credited to a property. The following table shows the charges and credits. Please note that special cases will be handled differently.

**Bonded Sewer Fees and Bonded Lateral Fees**

Any person desiring a permit to connect or to construct a Special House Connection Sewer or Bonded Sewer House Connection Sewer shall make a written application to the Board, giving such information as the Board may require. The Board may issue a permit to make such sewer connection upon payment of fees, and in addition to payment of a charge per front foot of the lot sought to be connected, if said lot is rectangular and has an ordinary area of approximately 6,500 square feet.

When the shape of a lot is other than the usual rectangular shape or unusual in area, and the strict adherence to the above mentioned provision would require a property owner to pay amount not commensurate with the benefits to be received, the provisions of this section as to the limits of the frontage of a lot to be assessed may be modified by the Board.

Nothing in this section shall be deemed or construed to apply to the issuing of a permit for the construction of Bonded Sewer House Connection Sewers if the property sought to be connected, although abutting on a Bonded Sewer, has been duly assessed for a public sewer constructed in the front, rear or at the side of each property.

Upon giving such information as the Board may require on forms to be furnished for the purpose, payment of the charges may be made in advance of the application for, or the issuance of, the permit to make such connection to any bonded sewer, and, upon such payment having been made, the applicant for the permit to connect shall be entitled to such permit upon payment of the fees prescribed in the LAMC, Sections 64.11.2, 64.15 and 64.16.1.

**Types of Connections**

Property Line Connection - Sewer main lines (local sewers) are in the public rights-of-way (streets) and in the public sanitary sewer easements over private properties. If a service connection (pipe from the local sewer to the property line) is available, then the S-Permit is for a property line connection. The City’s sewer maps show the availability of this service connection. A regular plumber or contractor may obtain this “property line connection” S-Permit.
New Lateral, House Connection or Service Connection - If a house connection sewer is not available at the property line, then the permit is for the construction of a new house connection sewer. In this case the permit is issued to a Bonded Sewer Contractor only. There is a special qualification given to these contractors for working in the public rights-of-way by the Board of Public Works, per LAMC Section 64.15.1. Each lot must have a separate sewer connection. If a property is split and there are separate buildings on each lot, then each building must have its own separate connection.

Authority

Sewers – Undedicated Streets - LAMC Section 64.11 states no person shall connect any sewer which has been or may hereafter be constructed in any street, prior to the dedication and acceptance of such street by the City Council, with any public sewer unless such sewer has been laid under the supervision and to the satisfaction of the Board and in accordance with the specifications for public sewers adopted by the City Council and on file in the office of the City Clerk, and in accordance with plans and profiles approved by the City Engineer.

House Connection Sewer – LAMC, Section 64.11.1 states that not more than one lot shall be connected to any one house connection sewer.

House Sewer Connection – Permit – LAMC, Section 64.12 states

(a) No person shall make, construct, alter, or repair any house connection sewer, bonded house connection sewer, special house connection sewer, industrial waste sewer connection, industrial waste storm drain connection, storm drain connection, or special drainage connection, or any portion of any such sewer or storm drain connections, including sampling manholes, or connect any house sewer, soil pipe, or plumbing to any such sewer or storm drain connections or to a sewer or storm drain under the jurisdiction of the City of Los Angeles, without first obtaining a written permit therefor from the Board of Public Works.

(b) Persons desiring to obtain a permit for any of the purposes enumerated in Sections 64.12 to 64.22 inclusive, shall file with the Board a written application therefor signed by the applicant, on printed forms, furnished by it for that purpose. The application shall contain such information as the Board may require. If it appears from the application that the work to be performed thereunder is to be done according to the regulations contained or referred to in this article, governing the doing of such work, a permit shall be issued upon payment of the permit charges required or referred to in Section 64.15.

(c) The Board before granting any permit in accordance with the provisions of Sections 64.12 to 64.22 inclusive, which will necessitate any excavation in, upon or under any State highway in this City or the making of a connection to a sewer or house connection sewer for which a permit is also required from a
County Sanitation District, or a political subdivision other than this City, shall require such permit to be presented for inspection.

(d) Nothing in this section shall be deemed or construed to require the application for or the issuance of a permit for the purpose of removing stoppages in any house connection sewer, except when it is necessary to replace any part or all of such sewer connection or to excavate in any street or sidewalk or sewer easement in connection therewith.

(e) A permit under which an excavation, tunnel, or the laying of sewer, or storm drain pipe in any public street is contemplated will be issued only to other departments of the City, other governmental agencies, or contractors holding a valid contractor's license issued by the Contractors' License Board of the State of California in the classification of A-1 General Engineering, B-1 General Building, C-36 Plumbing, or C-42 Sewer, Sewage Disposal, Drain, Cement Pipe Laying. (Added by Ord. No. 121,900, Eff. 6/4/62.)

**EXCEPTION:**
A permit for making sewer connections at the property line may be issued to any responsible person when in the opinion of the Board the granting of such permit will not endanger public property or jeopardize the public's interests.

(f) Any person performing work pursuant to a permit issued under this section shall comply with all the provisions of Section 62.03.1 of this Code. (Added by Ord. No. 150,478, Eff. 2/6/78.)

**Permit Exemptions** – LAMC, Section 64.13
The provisions of Section 64.12 requiring permits for the construction of house connection sewers shall not be construed to apply to contractors constructing house connection sewers under contracts entered into under proceedings had or taken pursuant to any of the procedure ordinances of this City, or the County of Los Angeles, or the Statutes of the State of California, or other contracts authorized by the City Council, providing for the construction of such house connection sewers.

**How long does it take to get an S-Permit?**
This is an over-the-counter permit. When all documents, including Sewerage Facilities Charges, any required easement, sewer capacity and the constructed building are ready, then the S-Permit may be issued in less than 30 minutes.

**How long is an S-Permit valid?**
An S-Permit is good for two years from the date of issuance.
When does an S-Permit expire?

The S-Permit expires two years from the date that it was issued. If the job is in progress and inspection is on going, then it will not expire.

How will the City determine if a project is being performed diligently?

The Bureau of Contract Administration of the Department of Public Works will make that determination depending on the job conditions that may delay the project.

What is the Sewer Facilities Charge (SFC)?

The Sewer Facilities Charge is collected to pay for sewer infrastructure improvements. Monies are collected by the BOE for the Bureau of Sanitation (BOS) which manages the City’s sewer system. The SFC is based upon the volume of flow and the strength (or quality) of sewage discharged into the City’s sewer system. The SFC is due when construction and use triggers a net increase in flow and or sewage strength. The SFC is tied to individual parcels of land and is based on improvements to each parcel. SFC credit is based on the use and area of an existing building and buildings demolished after June 16, 1970. SFC fees are calculated based on the proposed new building use and area. SFC credits are used to offset SFC fees. The amount of the SFC rate is based on use and formulas developed by the BOS. The current rate was established by Ordinance on June 6, 1996.

S-Permit Extension

Paying the basic fee plus the surcharges (2% and 7%) will renew the permit for another two years. The reason for requesting a permit extension must be reasonable and beyond the control of the applicant.

Revised S-Permit

These permits may be revised to accommodate any change in scope of work. Permit fees will be adjusted, additional fees or refunds will be made to reflect any change.

Expired S-Permit with Work Still Planned

Once the S-Permit is issued and inspection has started, then the project may go on until satisfactorily completed. As long as the applicant is progressing with the work described in the permit diligently and responsibly, then the permit stays in effect until completion of work.
8.2 General Conditions or Requirements for an S-Permit

Liability Insurance and Deposit Requirements

1) Liability Insurance

a) **Required** - An S-Permit permit required by LAMC, Section 64.12, under which an excavation, tunnel, or the laying of sewer or storm drain pipe in any public street, public place or public easement is contemplated, will not be issued until the applicant has filed with the City Engineer a policy of protective liability insurance in which the City has been named as insured or co-insured with the Permittee. The policy of insurance shall insure the City and its officers and employees while acting within the scope of their duties, against all claims arising out of or in connection with the operations of the Permittee, or any contractor or subcontractor of the Permittee, pursuant to the permit.

b) **Amounts** - Bodily Injury $250,000 each person $500,000 each occurrence $500,000 aggregate products and completed operations Property Damage $100,000 each occurrence. $250,000 aggregate.

A combined single limit policy with aggregate limits in the amount of $1 million will be considered equivalent to the required minimum limits.

c) **Coverage** - Such policy of insurance shall provide coverage at least as broad as that provided in the Standard Form approved by the National Bureau of Casualty Underwriters, together with such endorsements as are required to cover the risks involved.

2) Deposits

a) **Required** - An S-Permit will not be issued until the applicant has deposited with the Board not less than $1000 in cash, which shall remain on deposit with the Board for not less than six months from the date of the last permit issued to the depositor. Such deposit will be held to insure the faithful performance of the work and the payment of all charges required by LAMC, Section 64.12 to 64.22 inclusive, and the Board is hereby empowered to deduct from the cash deposit all sums due for changes and for any and all damages accruing to this City by reason of faulty or defective work of the Permittee.

b) **Surety Bond in Lieu of Deposit** - Whenever a cash deposit in the amount of $1000 or over is required, the applicant may provide in lieu of such cash deposit, a good and sufficient bond in an amount equal to the amount of such cash deposit, payable to this City, by and executed by the applicant as the principal and by a reliable surety company.
satisfactory to the City. Such bond shall be conditioned upon the payment of all charges required by LAMC, Sections 64.12 to 64.22 inclusive, and the faithful and proper performance of work upon the same terms as those required by such cash deposit in lieu of which such bond is executed. The Board is empowered to enforce collections under the bond for all sums due for charges and for any and all damages accruing to this City by reasons of faulty or defective work of the Permittee.

Exemptions From Liability Insurance and Deposit Requirements

From Federal Government, the State, every county, city, municipal corporation, irrigation district, school district, district established by law, and any political or administrative subdivision of the State or Federal Government will not be required to make a deposit or to post a policy of protective liability insurance as otherwise required by LAMC, Sections 64.15 and 64.15.1.

Permittee’s Obligations

Disclose all the known information effecting the issuance of the S-Permit and work to be performed under the permit. The work shall be done in accordance with the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction.

Sewer Problems - The maintenance of the main line sewer (the sewer in the middle of the street and between the maintenance holes) is the responsibility of the City of Los Angeles. The maintenance of a lateral, service connection or house connection sewer (between the property and the main line sewer) is the responsibility of the abutting property owner. Service connections usually break due to age, clogged by debris, or from tree root penetration. There is a simple way to find out if the sewer problem is in the house connection or main line sewer. If your property is the only property on the block that has a sewer problem, then the problem is in your service connection and you need to call a plumber. If the problem were with the mainline sewer, then all properties connected to the line would have sewer problems at the same time. Also if the main line sewer were clogged, the water would be coming out of the maintenance hole cover. In case of a main line problem, please call (213) 485-5884 weekdays, from 6:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and (213) 485-7575 any other time.

The problem of root penetration into the sewer lines can be controlled by periodic chemical treatment of the line. Several trade name products are available on the market specifically for this purpose. Excavation and repair of faulty sewer pipe joints can prevent root penetration. Tree roots do not enter sewer lines unless there is a break or bad joint that leaks moisture and provides an opening encouraging root penetration.
If you need to excavate and repair your house connection sewer in the public right-of-way (sidewalk, street or alley) or easement (in the yard), then your Bonded Sewer Contractor must contact the appropriate Engineering District Office for an S-Permit. A simple and straightforward S-Permit for a typical house connection repair in the public right-of-way is approximately $180.00.

A dye test may be administered if there is doubt about the connection of a sewer lateral. Florescent dye is used to determine if a sewer lateral is connected to the City’s sewer main. Dye is used to track the flow of water from drain line to sewer main. The dye is deposited in the drain lines of the home or structure. The appearance of dye in the sewer main maintenance hole downstream of the sewer lateral in question results in a “positive” dye test. A positive dye test means the sewer lateral is connected to the sewer main. If no dye appears in the sewer main, then the sewer lateral is not connected to the City’s sewer main. This is a “negative” dye test. Dye tests are conducted by the Bureau of Sanitation.

Long established City policy, based on the opinion of the City Attorney, places the responsibility for the construction, maintenance, and repair of house connection sewer lines upon the property owner. The City Attorney states, in part: “…that this rule is not altered by the fact (if it be a fact) that roots of trees growing in the street caused clogging of the sewer line. The privilege is granted to the house owner to connect his house with the main publicly owned sewer and the duty to keep clean the privately owned sewer rests on the owner of such house connecting sewer, not upon the City.”

The house connection sewers are not of general benefit since they serve and can be used legally to serve only a single lot. The fact that the house connection sewer is in a public street does not mean that it is of public benefit and that the maintenance and repair should not therefore be performed by City forces at the expense of the general public.

In almost all cases, the owner of private property holds the underlying fee to the center of the street. The public street is actually an easement. The property owner there has a legal right to construct and maintain a house connection sewer between his private property and the public street sewer, subject to permit provisions of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

A Sewer Permit shall be issued to Bonded Sewer Contractors only or to individuals who satisfactorily comply with the Liability Insurance and Deposit Requirement according to Section 64.15.1 of the Los Angeles Municipal code.

Please contact the BOE’s Central District Office to become a Bonded Sewer Contractor or to comply with the Liability Insurance and Deposit Requirement for one project. Please contact the appropriate district office to obtain Sewerage Facilities Charge (SFC) and a Sewer Permit for the location of the property.
Information Required Before an S-Permit Can be Issued

Permitee’s name, address, telephone number, and job address are required. If connection to the sewer is made through another property, then a recorded private sewer easement is required. The contractor must be a bonded sewer contractor. Bonded Sewer Contractors are approved by the Board of Public Works.

Safety Requirements

Trenches that are more than five (5) feet deep require shoring and other requirements to comply with California Occupational Safety & Health Community Association (CALOSHA). In general, safety measures in accordance with the current edition of the Work Area Traffic Control Handbook are required for construction work.

8.3 Standard Fees

Basic Application Fees

For more details see STANDARD FEES, CHARGES AND DEPOSITS

If special engineering, investigation, or design is required prior to issuance of a permit for any storm drain connection, special drainage connection, or industrial waste storm drain connection, a deposit to cover the estimated cost of such special engineering must be made to the Board before a permit will be issued.

Inspection Fees

For more details see STANDARD FEES, CHARGES AND DEPOSITS

Sewer Facilities Charge (SFC)

SFC rates are contained in a table in the sewer computer application. The SFC calculation step in the computer application will generate the net SFC due, if any.

8.4 Cancellations and Refunds

No Refund.
8.5 Other Requirements for an S-Permit

Each Lot shall be connected to the City mainline sewer directly. Connections may not be shared. Sewerage Facilities Charges must be paid before an S-Permit is issued. Connections must be made to an available “Y” before any saddle connection is installed.

Storm drain connections must be connected to the catch basins first before a connection to the main line is allowed.

Any traffic mitigation required must be identified and approved by Department of Transportation. Other obstructions such as street trees, fire hydrants, street lights, power poles and utility meter boxes must be identified, and permission to relocate or remove them must be secured from the owner of the item. The applicant must also check interfering underground utilities. Substructure Maps are available at the pertinent BOE District Office.

Street Tree Permits

When tree roots are causing damage to a building sewer connection, then a Street Tree Removal Permit or a Root Trimming Permit issued by the Bureau of Street Services is required.

Water Meter Boxes, Gas Shut-Off Valve Boxes, Street Light and Traffic Signal Conduit and Pull Boxes, and Parking Meters

These obstructions may be removed or relocated. The Permittee must contact the owner of the effected utility.

S-Permit Specifications

House sewer connections (building connections) are designed per Bureau of Engineering Standard Plan S-110-1 and S-111-0.

Connections shall be minimum of four (4) feet under ground at the property line and have a 2% minimum slope.

Inspection Requirements

Applicant must call for inspection at the number indicated on the permit, 24 hours before commencement of work.
8.6 Enforcement

What is a violation?

- Connections to the sewer that are made without an S-Permit are illegal.
- A violation occurs when a connection is made without paying either the Sewerage Facilities Charge, Industrial Waste Permit fee (if applicable), and Bonded Sewer Fee.
- Connection to another building connection is illegal.
- Connection to a maintenance hole is prohibited unless approved by the City Engineer.

How will violations be dealt with?

A Public Works Inspector will stop the work and issue a citation. The person responsible for the work violation will be directed to the applicable Bureau of Engineering office to apply for a permit. All applicable fees must be paid to clear a citation.

Illegal connections will be subject to corrective action required by the City Engineer. Corrective action must be taken by the parties responsible for the illegal connection.

8.7 How to Apply for an S-Permit

Job Description

In order to issue an S-Permit, the Applicant must identify the location of the property and work. Usually an address where the connection is made is sufficient. BOE Staff will verify the address and location. Availability of a main line sewer for that location and capacity of the line is checked by BOE Staff. BOE staff use Navigate LA (http://navigatela.lacity.org) to identify the legal description of the parcel and obtain relevant sewer information. This information is matched to the permit address database. The sewer or the drainage map for the project location must be identified. Also, the BOE District Office where the project is located must be identified, in case the District Engineer’s input is required.

If the project consists of a connection that is to be made to a storm drainpipe, then the type and method of connection must be determined and approved by the BOE Staff. A junction structure may be required.

Work Scope

A typical sewer or storm drain project may include repair work or a new connection. The scope of work is based on the location of the property line connection and the mainline sewer connection. A new saddle may need to be
installed if a “wye” is not available. The area of the sidewalk and street that must be cut must be determined. The depth that the pipe will be placed under ground must be determined, as well. If the project is a storm drain connection, the distance from the property line to the point of connection to a catch basin or storm drain and the depth of pipe must be determined. Additionally, the area of the trench in the sidewalk and/or street must be determined.

S-Permit Application

The S-Permit is issued by BOE Staff at the BOE District Offices. BOE Staff accesses a computerized S-Permit application form, whereby they will input the pertinent information and issue the permit over the counter. Please see the Appendix for more information on the S-Permit computer application.

Sewer Facilities Charge Payment

A Sewerage Facilities Charge (SFC) must be paid and a SFC certificate issued for new buildings and developments. A sewer repair project does not require any SFC. Permits will be issued to Bonded Sewer Contractors only.

Notification of Inspection

Prior to commencing work, the customer is required to contact the Bureau of Contract Administration (BCA). The number to contact is printed on the A-Permit. The BCA will dispatch a Public Works Inspector to review the scope of work with the customer. The Inspector will inform the customer when to call for future inspections and will review any other information or questions the customer may have.

Final Inspection

Upon completion of the work, the Inspector will perform a final inspection. If the work is completed satisfactorily, the Inspector will sign off or approve the S-Permit. The S-Permit is then closed. A copy of the completed permit with the Inspector’s signature is sent to BOE with the Inspector’s comments and signature. This may be done electronically via a computer. If the work is part of a Department of Building and Safety (DBS) permit and all other conditions are cleared, the Department of Public Works will agree to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy by DBS.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

At the conclusion of all permit transactions with a customer, Applicant, and/or Permittee, all Public Counter Staff shall present the customer a Customer Satisfaction Survey Form. The Survey shall be presented to every customer, at every transaction. Should the customer decline to accept the Survey, Public Counter Staff are instructed to simply place the declined Survey back into Survey
8.8 How to Check a Sewer Permit and Storm Drain Permit

The following list of items can be used by BOE staff to check the Sewer Permit and the Storm Drain Permit. The Dye Test, Sewer Permit, SFC Certificate, and Storm Drain are all processed using the sewer computer application. This checklist is based on using the sewer computer application.

1) Verify the identification of the applicant and the location of the work
   • Applicant’s complete information, such as name, address and telephone
   • Verify job address by completing an address search
   • Verify the applicant is a Bonded Sewer Contractor

2) Verify scope and type of work
   • Check the width and length of the trench
   • Make sure Sewerage Facilities Charges (SFC) and Bonded Sewer Fees are paid; if not, then include them in the application
   • Make sure the applicant has made consideration for obstructions such as meters, poles, fire hydrants
   • Make sure a “wye” is available for connection, otherwise a saddle connection is required
   • Make sure two separate lots or properties are not connected to one lateral

3) Determine all clearances and related permits

4) Determine if a field check is required

5) Determine fees
   • The computer application will calculate the BOE fees and SFC credits and fees. Please check SFCs carefully.
   • Discuss fees and refund policy with the Applicant
   • Verify Applicant is willing to pay fee
   • Calculate fees

7) Permit Issuance
   • Obtain required Applicant’s signatures on the SFC (if any) and permit
   • Obtain payment and submit it to the cashier