

# HALO, Neighbors!

*The Newsletter of Home And Landowners Organization, Inc.*

December 2010

*Happy New Year!*

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## **December Meeting Recap**

The city budget and the potential closure of the Rabbit Creek Fire Station were the topics of discussion for much of the meeting. Firefighter Brian Partch from Huffman/O'Malley Community Council spoke on the statistics of the various fire stations and their good response time for cardiac save rates. Other topics included the Hillside District Plan Pre-Production Draft, which is now being edited for publication. Several mistakes were discovered in this final draft, and HALO members who participated in the Citizens Advisory Committee are attempting to get these errors corrected.

The potential transfer of Heritage Land Bank lands to the Anchorage Community Development Authority was brought up and HALO should be alert to this change, how it will affect SE Anchorage residents, and how it would advance the mission of the HLB. See the HALO website at <http://www.anchoragehalo.org/> for the draft December minutes.

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## **Next HALO Meeting--Thursday, January 6th**

HALO's next scheduled meeting is Thursday, January 6th, 2011. Items on the agenda will probably include presentations by the DOT on the street and highway classifications and from AWWU on their proposed purchase of some Legacy Pointe property for another water tank.

HALO holds Board meetings the first Thursday, monthly, at 7 pm at the Holy Spirit Center (O'Malley Rd at Hillside Dr). See more about HALO's mission below. Members and guess are invited to attend, contribute to the discussions and alert the Board to issues that affect SE Anchorage neighborhoods.

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## **How to Build your NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME WATCH**

A Hillside family was gone for a month and came home to find their valuables, even their cars, gone. Crime stats show the Hillside has a fairly low rate compared with other parts of Anchorage. But statistics don't matter when *you* are the victim!

What can you do to prevent this? There are lots of things you can do, one is to get to know your

neighbors and work with them to share the responsibility for keeping your neighborhood safe. The police can't do it all. We are an important part of the crime prevention system.

We are lucky that Anchorage has a Crime Watch program to help us organize to protect our homes. Forming a Neighborhood Watch Group is fairly easy. Usually they are less than 20 homes. All participants should be able to clearly see each other's homes so Hillside Groups are small. I set one up with only three homes.

To get started, figure out where (your home?) and when (Monday thru Thursday 7pm ish?) you can invite neighbors to a meeting. The Neighborhood Watch program will provide presentation invites, reminder cards and brochures.

Officer Natasha Welch will make the presentation. She'll have a crime map that displays the past year's reported crime in your area with "learning points" from each event. She'll talk about what is suspicious and where to report non-emergency events. She'll bring displays and some of the latest home safety items available at most Anchorage stores. The presentation is an hour long and may be longer with questions.

Once at least 50% of the designated area has participated in the presentation, you will qualify for window clings and decals provided by the program and a sign will be posted on the street.

My Neighborhood Watch Group is officially three homes but we include others in our efforts. We had several successes in the past 10 years. We thwarted a group of kids who were casing the area and had stolen items in their van. We did a phone-tree and email notification when a "magazine subscription salesman" was knocking on doors. As part of the policing effort, we learned that it is our role to greet and question strangers in the neighborhood. Most are nice folks just passing through, others may have been checking the place out and moved on when they realized we keep our eyes open.

This is easy and effective. The Neighborhood Crime Watch director is Officer Natasha Welch. Contact her at [ncw@muni.org](mailto:ncw@muni.org) or call 786-8585. Let's work together so the biggest event after a long vacation is the slide show for all your envious friends.

Submitted by John Weddleton

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## **You and Your Septic System**

### ***Part III - Advanced Treatment Wastewater Systems***

by Ted Moore, P.E.

Flattop Technical Services

*Note: This is the third in a series of articles. The first article describing conventional septic systems appeared in the October, 2010 HALO newsletter. Last month's discussion was about septic system maintenance, troubleshooting and upgrading.*

Conventional septic systems, consisting of a septic tank followed by a soil absorption system, are the preferred on-site wastewater disposal system for most lots and homeowners because they are inexpensive to install and require a minimum of maintenance. When properly installed in suitable soils they can provide an adequate level of wastewater treatment for many years. However, the septic tank in a conventional on-site wastewater disposal system provides only primary treatment (settling of solids), but little biological degradation. This means that the soil absorption field receives a significant load of suspended solids. Not only are these suspended solids potentially high in harmful bacteria and pathogens, they also clog up the pores of the native receiving soil, eventually causing the system to fail. To minimize potential contamination of wells and surface water by conventional septic systems,

regulations require large (100-foot) minimum separation distances between them. This has the effect of severely limiting the places on a lot where a conventional septic system can be installed.

Until recently, whenever a site for a conventional on-site wastewater disposal system could not be found on a lot, due to poor soils, shallow groundwater or insufficient separation distances, the only on-site wastewater disposal alternative approved by the Municipality was a holding tank. As discussed in the previous article, holding tanks are very unpopular, both because of the on-going cost of pumping, and because they significantly decrease the value of a residence. Clearly other options are needed.

***Advanced treatment wastewater systems (ATS):***

Advanced wastewater treatment systems are designed to provide a significantly higher level of wastewater treatment in a controlled environment than is provided by a septic tank. When properly designed and operated, the effluent from an ATS is much lower in harmful bacteria and pathogens and has much less suspended solids that clog up a soil absorption drainfield. This means not only that the soil absorption drainfield can be smaller, but also the separation distances can be safely reduced.

A number of companies worldwide and in the 'lower 48' have been manufacturing and selling advanced treatment wastewater systems for many years. Most of these are proprietary technologies, some of which have undergone a rigorous testing program administered by the National Sanitation Foundation. The biggest drawbacks to wider ATS acceptance is that they are expensive to install and often do not receive the level of on-going monitoring and maintenance that their technological complexity requires. When an ATS fails due to lack of maintenance it can create a worse public health problem than failing conventional septic systems. For this reason, plus legitimate concerns about ATS treatment performance in a cold climate such as ours, regulators have been justifiably cautious about permitting their use in Anchorage. However, starting in 1993 the Municipality initiated a pilot program to demonstrate and test the performance of specific ATS technologies in Anchorage. Since then it has developed strict regulations governing the ATS testing and approval process and on-going maintenance requirements.

***Intermittent Sand Filters:***

The first ATS installations approved in Anchorage were Intermittent Sand Filters (***ISF***). In essence, an ISF is a large sand filter that is installed between the septic tank and the soil absorption system, which provides a high level of treatment before the wastewater is discharged. Typical ISFs have an area of 360 square feet and contain 2 feet of carefully graded coarse sand and include an aeration system to promote biologic breakdown of wastewater constituents. Extensive testing of pilot installations showed that the effluent from a properly functioning ISF is far cleaner than septic tank effluent. An ISF is not a proprietary system developed and supported by a specific company, so their functionality is highly dependent on the care and professionalism with which it is constructed and maintained. Unfortunately, there have been a number of ISF failures in Anchorage (usually due to the top surface of the sand filter becoming clogged), and the Municipality has had difficulty ensuring regular monitoring and maintenance.

***Suspended aeration package treatment units:***

In 1994 a second ATS called the "***Biocycle***" was introduced to Anchorage. In essence this system consists of a 4-compartment, suspended aeration, wastewater treatment package plant that replaces a conventional septic tank. Test results indicate that the Biocycle is capable of producing effluent meeting secondary treatment standards, which makes it suitable for similar applications as the ISF. The company manufacturing and distributing Biocycle units in Alaska has an excellent track record of performing quarterly on-site inspections and servicing of all of their systems. Numerous other companies in the lower 48 manufacture similar suspended aeration package treatment plants; however as of 2010 none have gone through the required approval and testing process to market their units in Anchorage.

***Packed Filter Beds:***

Starting in 1996 Orenco Systems (a large wastewater technology company based in Oregon) teamed up with Anchorage Tank to demonstrate, test and market Packed Filter Bed technology in

Anchorage. It has been an evolutionary process, starting with initial models called Recirculating Trickling Filters. These early models morphed into a unit called Reactex, which ultimately morphed into **Advantex**.

Basically, an Advantex system consists of a 2-compartment septic tank with a pump in the second compartment that intermittently pumps a portion of the fluid in the second compartment up into an aerobic treatment module containing dangling strips of fibrous media. The geotextile strips provide a suitable environment where aerobic bacteria can break down much of the solids in the wastewater into gaseous components and water. The process also removes some of the nitrogen found in wastewater. Test results have demonstrated that effluent from this system generally exceeds secondary treatment standards.

The Advantex system also features continuous monitoring of fluid levels and pump operation via a telephone connection to Orenco headquarters. Thus, any mechanical malfunction is reported immediately to the local service contractor so that repairs can be made – often without the homeowner even knowing there was a problem. Like the Biocycle, the Advantex maintenance system has an excellent track record.

Since approximately 2008 a second Packed Filter Bed system called **Quanics** has also been tested and approved for use in Anchorage. Quanics is locally distributed by Greer Tank and Garness Engineering. Instead of suspended geotextile strips, Quanics' treatment module uses open cell foam cubes as the substrate supporting the beneficial aerobic bacteria. Quanics also has a telephone based monitoring system to call the service provider in the event of equipment malfunction. Each of these distributors can provide test data that they assert demonstrates the superiority of their technology.

Part IV in the next newsletter will address on-site **Neighborhood Cluster Wastewater systems**.

*Ted Moore is a local civil engineer who specializes in septic system design, construction and testing. Comments or questions on this article may be e-mailed to [tgmoore@gci.net](mailto:tgmoore@gci.net)*

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## **You and Your Water Well**

# **SHOCK CHLORINATING YOUR WATER WELL**

*Note: This is a continuing series of topical information about water wells by Wayne Westburg, M-W Drilling.*

Everyone should chlorinate their water well at least once per year as part of a good maintenance program. Because of well access problems this should probably be done in the summer. If you have orange to black staining in your toilet bowls, you have an iron problem and chlorination will help precipitate out the iron and manganese which commonly cause the staining. Following is the outline of the simple process of shock chlorination.

Pour a quart of chlorox into a five gallon bucket and fill the bucket with water. Take this to the wellhead and remove the well cap (normally this will require a 9/16" wrench). Run a hose from a hose bib over to the well and run the hose stream of water down into the well. Slowly pour the five gallon bucket of chlorox mix into the stream of water going down the well. Swish the hose around so that you totally wet down the inner surface of the well casing. Continue doing this until you get a strong chlorine smell coming out of the hose. Continue pumping for several minutes after you obtain the strong smell to assure that you have chlorinated the well thoroughly.

Next, go into the house and run water from every tap, one at a time, until you get the strong chlorine smell at each. In this manner you are decontaminating all of the piping in the house. Once these operations are complete, there should be no water usage for a 6 to 8 hour contact period in the house.

So, obviously the best time for chlorination is just before bedtime or when you know there will be no one in the house needing water.

After the contact period run water out of all the taps until the chlorine smell has dissipated and you can stand to use the water. Initially, the water may be very discolored or, if you have an iron bacteria problem, maybe even sludgy. Run it until it is clean. If the staining persists repeat the above process. It may take several treatments before you've gotten rid of the iron bacteria. If the mild staining persists, you may just have high minerals in the aquifer and may want to consider a water treatment system but most of the time this procedure will take care of the problem.

*Submitted by Wayne Westberg, MGWC. If you have questions you would like to have addressed in this column, contact Wayne at [w44west@gci.net](mailto:w44west@gci.net)*

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## **AFD Update**

We have recently been discussing the proposed cuts to our Anchorage Fire Department and what they would mean to Hillside.

A look at the monthly averages for actual AFD responses during the past year gives us a better understanding of how AFD serves our community. These responses range from car fires to full structure fires, and the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) numbers can be anything ranging from sledding accidents to cardiac arrests.

### Fire Station 10 Rabbit Creek

Medical Calls: 108

Fire Calls: 98

Total: 201

### Fire Station 8 O'Malley Road

Medical Calls: 320

Fire Calls: 186

Total: 506

### Fire Station 9 Huffman Road

Medical Calls: 844

Fire Calls: 398

Total: 1242

Statistically these numbers spike the last two months of every year due to cold weather and increased activity over the holidays. As you can also see from the total responses for each station, fire stations are strategically placed per their geographic location providing the best possible coverage in response times to these areas.

As always, AFD employees remind all of us to stay safe this holiday season. You are invited to drop by your local fire station for a tour and a cup of coffee. AFD will be there 24 hours a day and seven days a week to serve our community.

*Submitted by Brian Partch, HOCC Steering Committee member and AFD firefighter.*

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## HALO Website

Visit the HALO, Inc. web site at <http://www.anchoragehalo.org/>. Learn more about your organization and issues of special interest for residents on the Hillside. If you have comments, or would like submit postings on the web site, please contact: Bjarne Holm at [bjarneholm9@hotmail.com](mailto:bjarneholm9@hotmail.com)

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## HALO Neighbors! Newsletter

We appreciate all the comments and feedback from this Newsletter. Your comments were especially interesting concerning the traffic issues at Huffman and Pintail. If you wondered, the feedback about the potential roundabout solution received a unanimous “thumbs down”. We especially enjoyed hearing your creative methods for avoiding the existing roundabouts!

If you have an idea for an article, or a question you would like to have discussed with your friends and neighbors, let us know. We also encourage to forward this newsletter to your neighbors and help them become involved in their community. Or better yet, print a copy and hand it to someone!

HALO is a place where all Hillside can come together and guide our future. While we are made up of representatives from most of the area Community Councils, we are in a unique place that separates us from the Municipal government. Besides our successful Candidate events, we address the broad issues that affect each and every resident.

Guests are always welcome to attend our monthly Board meetings, and we encourage you to participate whether or not you and your neighborhood are facing a particular issue. Our elected officials often join us or we teleconference during the session when we have particular concerns.

We especially thank our newest members for joining this unique organization. Especially in today's climate it is valuable for us to be informed and work together.

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## Join Your Friends and Neighbors at HALO

Are you a HALO member? Dues are only \$10 a year. HALO meets on first Thursday of each month, at 7 pm, at the Holy Spirit Retreat, on the southwest corner of Hillside and O'Malley. Our elected representatives often join us and it is the perfect place to learn about what is going on with and in your community. All meetings are open to the public, and every effort is made to announce any change in date, time or location.

HALO is a non-profit, grass roots organization formed in 1969 (before the merger of the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Borough) for the purpose of advocating for rural neighborhoods in Southeast Anchorage. Residents outside of the HALO area also join to support our goals and share in our activities.

HALO's boundaries encompass part or all of eight Community Councils: Abbott Loop, Basher, Bear Valley, Glen Alps, Hillside-East, Huffman/O'Malley, Mid-Hillside and Rabbit Creek. While we work closely with these councils, HALO maintains a separate identity from the Municipal government. We urge memberships in both your local Community Council and HALO.

Name

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Phone (home)

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Phone (alternate, optional)

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Mailing Address

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Property Address, Subdivision & Approximate Acreage:

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E-Mail Address

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New Member                       Renewal

I would be interested in serving as a board member

I would be willing to work with a committee

Dues Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 per year

Donation to Legal Fund \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

Print and send to: HALO, P.O. Box 110096, Anchorage, AK 99511

**(Email addresses are invaluable for timely notification. All information remains confidential!)**