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# Greenville removing lead from wastewater

**Jessica Dudenhofer**  
Staff Writer

**GREENVILLE** - How it got there in the city's gray water, no one knows.

All the city knows is that it's time to get rid of the 400 to 600 pounds of lead accumulated the bottom of one of the tanks at the Wastewater Treatment Plant on Fairplains Street.

City Council members voted 7 to 0 on Tuesday to approve a bid from BioTech of Beulah to remove contaminated biosolids (sludge) from one of the tanks at the treatment plant.

According to Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor Gene Baxter, testing revealed the lead contamination back in early spring when specialists performed their regular testing before scheduling land applications of accumulated sludge.

"There's no hard and fast evidence of where it came from," Baxter said, assuring the council there is no danger of the lead contaminating the water table. "It may have been a midnight dump. We may never know."

All the lead currently is sitting at the bottom of a digester tank and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is requiring that the city dispose of the contaminated waste in an approved landfill off site.

Baxter and City Manager George Bosanic said this is the first time in at least 38 years that a significant amount of any contaminant required an off-site disposal.

"This is really an amazing situation," Bosanic said.

Baxter said proactive sampling caught the high lead levels before they could be spread through land applications. He said there was no lead contact with drinking water and that they've tested water to ensure safe levels of the contaminant.

"What's important for everyone to know is that we're not going in the middle of the night and dumping this on a field," Bosanic said, explaining how the city would be paying extra to ensure the proper disposal of the lead.

Though about \$30,000 is annually budgeted for sludge removal and land application, the decontamination process could cost up to \$47,855.

Because this is an unbudgeted item, funds will be withdrawn from the sewer fund balance to cover the cost.

"But that's the worst case scenario," Baxter said.