



Liepājas pilsētas pašvaldības administrācija

### **Sabiedrisko attiecību un mārketinga daļa**

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## **The latest updates on the Liepāja wastewater treatment plant incident**

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Liepāja/Latvia

Authorities report on the latest developments in the emergency response to the accident at the Liepāja Wastewater Treatment Plant on Sunday 23 July, where the wall of the pre-treatment reservoir collapsed, leaking part of the treatment water into the sea.

### **The latest news:**

- According to the samples collected by both the Health Inspectorate and the water treatment company "Liepājas ūdens", the water quality is reported to be good. Swimming is allowed!
- The company "Liepājas ūdens" carries out daily water quality analyses and monitors changes;
- The responsible authorities emphasise the absence of any threat to human health;
- The volume of wastewater discharged into the sea is not considered to have had a lasting impact on the Baltic Sea ecosystem;
- There are no grounds for imposing restrictions on sea fisheries;
- On 23 July evening, an emergency incident occurred due to the collapse of the wall of the pre-treatment reservoir of the Liepāja waste water treatment plant, causing part of the treatment water to spill into the sea;
- On 24 July night, a waste water spill into the sea was stopped;
- A construction-related incident resulted in the discharge of ~ 12 000 m<sup>3</sup> of untreated waste water into the Baltic Sea;
- An investigation has been launched by the State Police to assess the damage to the natural environment.

### **Update on August 7**

According to the samples collected on July 31 and August 1 the Health Inspectorate informed that the water quality is good.

### **Update on July 27, 11.50 AM local time**

The State Health Inspectorate informed the Liepāja municipality that the water samples taken on 25.07.2023 at the Liepāja beach "Dienvidrietumi" and at the swimming area "Pie stadiona" next to the central stadium do not show any signs of microbiological contamination and the water quality is good, therefore **swimming is allowed!**

The water quality at Pāvilosta beach also meets all requirements for swimming!

### **Update on July 26, 6.20 PM local time**

The third water sample results have been received from the water treatment company "Liepājas ūdens".

The samples taken on Tuesday at the wastewater systems located on Lībiešu Street 33, at the beach "Liedagi" in the South Kurzeme region north from the city and from the central Liepāja beach near the stadium show that the water quality meets the regulations for swimming areas.

The next results will be available tomorrow and we are still waiting for the additional results from the Health Inspectorate.

### **Update on July 25, 6.50 PM local time**

Second water sample results are received. Taken on Monday at the wastewater systems on Lībiešu Street 33, at the South Kurzeme municipality's beach "Liedagi" and from the central beach near the Liepāja stadium, the samples also showed that the water quality meets the regulations for swimming places. The next results will be available tomorrow.

### **Update on July 25, 4.40 PM local time**

The construction-related incident caused the discharge of ~12 000 m<sup>3</sup> of untreated wastewater into the Baltic Sea.

The discharge of waste water into the sea is not considered as causing any lasting impact on the Baltic Sea ecosystem thus there are no grounds to impose restrictions on sea fishing.

The Health Inspectorate shall continue water quality measurements and will keep the public informed when the swimming ban is lifted.

The State Police has launched an investigation to establish the circumstances at the scene, to gather evidence, to obtain expert opinions, and to decide on the criminal procedure classification according to the damage caused to the nature environment, currently still being determined by the State Environmental Service.

### **Update on July 25, 7.50 AM local time**

- **The wastewater spill into the sea has been stopped tonight and the wastewater treatment plant has been restored to temporary operation.**

Employees of the water treatment plant "Liepājas ūdens", together with experts, have been searching for technical solutions to restore the structures as quickly as possible since the moment of the accident. All types of wastewaters were diverted from the damaged reservoir and wastewater treatment plant. As far as possible, the collected wastewater was accumulated in pipelines, pressure pipes and pumping stations, with additional pumps set up.

Currently, the wastewater discharge into the sea has been eliminated and is no longer leaking outside the treatment plant.

Recovery works, technical examination of the collapsed wall and investigation of the causes together with experts from Rīga Technical University are ongoing.

Authorities are also carrying out analyses and monitoring changes in water quality.

### **Update on 24 July, 19.20 PM local time**

- First results of tests have been received. The tests taken on 23 July show that the water quality meets swimming regulations. The next samples from the 24 July will be available on 25 July. The samples were taken at the wastewater systems at Lībiešu Street 33, at the regional beach "Liedagi" north of the city and at the central beach near the stadium. Testing requires certain amount of time.

The emergency response at the Liepāja Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is ongoing.

Modelling of the potential distribution of pollution has been carried out, taking into account the amount of pollution, wind direction and currents; the latest modelling data indicate that pollution may reach the Ziemeļu coast (north of Liepāja) in smaller concentrations, in a dispersed form, during the day.

Water treatment plant "Liepājas ūdens" is working at the site to find rapid technical solutions to restore the structures. At the moment, all types of wastewaters are diverted from the damaged reservoir and wastewater treatment plant. As far as possible, the collected wastewater is being accumulated in pipelines, pressure pipes and pumping stations. This allows the storage of approximately 21 000 m<sup>3</sup> of wastewater. The rest of the untreated wastewater is discharged to the sea through an emergency outfall. Note that the outfall through which the wastewater is discharged into the sea is located 1,3 km from the coast.

The staff of the WWTP is working to temporarily restore the operation of the wastewater treatment plant in the near future.

#### **Update on 24 July, 12.30 PM local time**

"The damage affected the pre-treatment reservoir, which is located more than 100 metres from the sea shore. We have now stopped all waste water from being channelled to the damaged reservoir. For the time being, it is being accumulated in the existing system. The reservoir consists of two sections - one section has a collapsed wall, the other section is functional. Within a day, we will carry out the assessments necessary to construct a temporary wastewater pipeline to bypass this collapsed section of the reservoir," said Andis Dejus, Head of "Liepājas ūdens" water treatment plant.

To reduce the amount of water entering the wastewater facilities, the authorities are appealing to residents to review their daily habits and reduce their water consumption over the next few days. At the same time, water pressure will be reduced during these days.

"There is no danger to human health. We are doing everything we can to stop the discharge of pollution into the Baltic Sea as soon as possible. All responsible services have been mobilised to tackle the emergency, the Civil Protection Commission has developed an action plan, which allows both continuous monitoring of water quality and repair of technical damage to the wastewater treatment plant," said Gunārs Anšņš, Chairman of the Liepāja City Council.

Joint actions of the State Environmental Service and the certified laboratory of "Liepājas ūdens" Ltd. will be carried out on a daily basis to monitor the quality of water samples. The results of the first samples will be known tonight.

"The main task now is to prevent the discharge of waste water into the Baltic Sea as soon as possible. Together with "Liepājas ūdens", all possible emergency measures are being taken to prevent this situation. According to the modelling data, taking into account the amount of pollution, wind direction and currents, the pollution is expected to reach Pāvilosta tomorrow in a less concentrated, dispersed form. We are monitoring the

situation and no substantial impacts on human health and fish resources have been detected," said Evita Šestakova, Head of the Kurzeme Regional Directorate of the State Environmental Service.

"The municipality of South Kurzeme has been putting up warning signs on the Medze parish beach and further north since Monday morning, and the municipal police visit places where there is access to the sea to inform people and advise them not to swim in the sea. Local public service municipal authority in the town of Grobiņa has sent written notices to its customers to reduce waste water as much as possible. Local authorities in parishes and tourism specialists are also notifying guest house owners about the incident so that they can urge their guests not to go to the sea to swim," said Andris Jefimovs, Head of the Fire Service of the South Kurzeme Regional Municipality.

It was reported that due to the emergency situation that occurred on Sunday evening, when the wall of the pre-treatment reservoir of the Liepāja Wastewater Treatment Plant collapsed, part of the treatment water spilled into the sea. Construction experts arrived at the scene to quickly find technical solutions to restore the structures. Representatives of the State Environmental Service were also on site to work with experts to identify the situation and potential environmental risks.

After the incident, the Liepāja City and South Kurzeme Joint Civil Protection Commission was summoned on the evening of Sunday, 23 July, to be briefed by the WWTC "Liepājas ūdens" on the current situation, steps already taken and further measures. The responsible services worked throughout the period, monitoring the situation and seeking technical solutions to restore the structures as quickly as possible.

Additional information:

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