

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT  
OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE & INSPECTION**

**IN RE: James Decesaris  
Marian Decesaris**

**FILE NO.: OCI-OWTS-14-264**

NOTICE OF VIOLATION

A. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Sections 42-17.1-2(21) and 42-17.6-3 of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, (“R.I. Gen. Laws”) you are hereby notified that the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (“Director” of “RIDEM”) has reasonable grounds to believe that the above-named parties (“Respondents”) have violated certain statutes and/or administrative regulations under RIDEM's jurisdiction.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

On 22 November 2013, RIDEM issued an informal notice (“Informal Notice”) by certified mail to Respondents regarding the property that is the subject of this Notice of Violation (“NOV”). The Informal Notice advised Respondents that, in accordance with the *Rhode Island Cesspool Act of 2007* (“Act”), if the property has a cesspool and is in an area subject to the Act, Respondents must connect the plumbing for the dwelling on the property to public sewers by January 1, 2014 or, if public sewers are not available, apply to RIDEM for a new onsite wastewater treatment system (“OWTS”) and install the system within 1 year of RIDEM’s approval. On 8 January 2014, RIDEM received a letter from Respondents’ attorney in response to the Informal Notice. The letter stated that the property has a cesspool, however, the cesspool is not in an area subject to the Act. On 29 January 2014, RIDEM issued a letter to Respondents (“January 29<sup>TH</sup> Letter”) requesting additional information. On 15 December 2014, as a follow up to a telephone conversation with Respondents’ attorney, RIDEM sent the January 29<sup>TH</sup> Letter to the attorney and agreed to extend the deadline to respond to 15 February 2015. Respondents failed to respond to or comply with the January 29<sup>TH</sup> Letter. On 17 February 2015, RIDEM issued an Expedited Citation Notice (“ECN”) by certified mail to Respondents that included an administrative penalty of \$200. The ECN required Respondents to connect the plumbing for the dwelling on the property to public sewers within 30 days or, if public sewers are not available, apply to RIDEM for a new OWTS and install the system within 14 days of RIDEM’s approval. The ECN was returned to RIDEM unclaimed. On 18 April 2015, the ECN was hand delivered to Respondents by a RIDEM environmental police officer. On 4 May 2015, RIDEM received electronic correspondence from Respondents’ attorney. The attorney stated that his clients intend to comply with the law and that RIDEM will receive a letter that describes the steps that will be taken and a timeframe to comply. No letter was received by RIDEM. Prior to issuing the NOV, RIDEM confirmed with the city that public sewers are available, and the property is not connected to the public sewers.

C. FACTS

- (1) The property is located at 36 Fairview Avenue, Assessor's Plat 2, Section 2, Lot 3674, in Cranston, Rhode Island ("Property").
- (2) Respondents own the Property.
- (3) The Property includes a dwelling ("Dwelling") that was constructed in 1926.
- (4) RIDEM reviewed its records for the Property. The review revealed that no permit was issued by RIDEM for an OWTS for the Property.
- (5) RIDEM contacted the City of Cranston, Rhode Island to determine if the Dwelling on the Property is connected to public sewers. RIDEM was informed that there is no record of a connection to public sewers.
- (6) Prior to 1968, cesspools were a common means of sewage disposal. Regulations enacted in Rhode Island in 1968 prohibited installation of cesspools.
- (7) Upon information and belief, RIDEM has determined that a cesspool is present on the Property and is located within 200 feet of the inland edge of a shoreline bordering a tidal water area (corresponding to the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council).
- (8) As of the date of the NOV, Respondents have failed to connect the plumbing for the Dwelling on the Property to the public sewers or install a new OWTS and abandon the cesspool.

D. VIOLATION

Based on the foregoing facts, the Director has reasonable grounds to believe that you have violated the following statutes and/or regulations:

- (1) **R.I. Gen Laws Section 23-19.15-6** – prohibiting the use of cesspools located within 200 feet of the inland edge of a shoreline bordering a tidal water area (corresponding to the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council) and requiring by January 1, 2014 the proper abandonment and replacement of the cesspool with an approved OWTS or the connection of the building served by the cesspool to the public sewers.
- (2) **Rhode Island's *Rules Establishing Minimum Standards Relating to Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (250-RICR-150-10-6)* ("OWTS Rules"), Part 6.57(C)** – prohibiting the use of cesspools located within 200 feet of the inland edge of a shoreline bordering a tidal water area (corresponding to the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council) and requiring by January 1, 2014 the proper abandonment and replacement of the cesspool with an approved OWTS or the connection of the building served by the cesspool to the public sewers.

E. ORDER

Based upon the violations alleged above and pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Section 42-17.1-2(21), you are hereby ORDERED to:

- (1) **IMMEDIATELY** cease use of the cesspool. No further use of the cesspool is allowed.
- (2) **Within 90 days of receipt of the NOV**, complete the following:
  - (a) Abandon the cesspool in accordance with Part 6.56 of the OWTS Rules and submit documentation to RIDEM's Office of Compliance and Inspection ("OC&I") to demonstrate compliance.
  - (b) If public sewers are available, connect the plumbing for the Dwelling on the Property to the public sewerage system and submit documentation to OC&I to demonstrate compliance.
  - (c) If public sewers are not available, retain a licensed OWTS designer and have the licensed OWTS designer submit a formal application and plan to RIDEM to replace the cesspool in accordance with the OWTS Rules ("Application"). The list of licensed OWTS designers can be obtained by contacting RIDEM's Office of Water Resources – OWTS Program at (401) 222-3961 or from RIDEM's web page at:  
[www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/licenses/isds/pdfs/deslist.pdf](http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/licenses/isds/pdfs/deslist.pdf).
- (3) The Application shall be subject to RIDEM's review and approval. Upon review, RIDEM shall provide written notification either granting formal approval or stating the deficiencies therein. Within 7 days (unless a longer time is specified) of receiving a notification of deficiencies in the Application, submit to RIDEM a modified proposal or additional information necessary to correct the deficiencies.
- (4) **Within 120 days of RIDEM's approval of the Application**, complete all work in accordance with the approval as evidenced by the issuance of a Certificate of Conformance by RIDEM.

F. PENALTY

- (1) Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Section 42-17.6-2, the following administrative penalty, as more specifically described in the attached penalty summary and worksheets, is hereby ASSESSED, jointly and severally, against each named respondent:

**\$9,000**

- (2) The proposed administrative penalty is calculated pursuant to Rhode Island's *Rules and Regulations for Assessment of Administrative Penalties* (250-RICR-130-00-1) ("Penalty Rules") and must be paid to RIDEM within 30 days of your receipt of the NOV.

- (3) Penalty payments shall be by one of two methods:

- (a) By certified check, cashier's check, or money order made payable to the **General Treasury – Water and Air Protection Program** and forwarded to:

Administrator, RIDEM Office of Compliance and Inspection  
235 Promenade Street, Suite 220  
Providence, RI 02908-5767

- (b) By wire transfer in accordance with instructions provided by RIDEM.

- (4) Penalties assessed against Respondents in the NOV are penalties payable to and for the benefit of the State of Rhode Island and are not compensation for actual pecuniary loss.
- (5) If any violation alleged herein shall continue, then each day during which the violation occurs or continues shall constitute a separate offense and the penalties and/or costs for that violation shall continue to accrue in the manner set forth in the attached penalty summary and worksheets. The accrual of additional penalties and costs shall be suspended if RIDEM determines that reasonable efforts have been made to comply promptly with the NOV.

G. RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING

- (1) Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Chapters 42-17.1, 42-17.6, 42-17.7 and 42-35, each named respondent is entitled to request a hearing before RIDEM's Administrative Adjudication Division regarding the allegations, orders and/or penalties set forth in Sections B through F above. All requests for hearing MUST:

- (a) Be in writing. See R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-17.1-2(21)(i) and 42-17.6-4(b).

- (b) Be **RECEIVED** by RIDEM's Administrative Adjudication Division, at the following address, within 20 days of your receipt of the NOV. See R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-17.1-2(21)(i) and 42-17.7-9:

Administrative Clerk  
RIDEM - Administrative Adjudication Division  
235 Promenade Street, Room 350  
Providence, RI 02908-5767

- (c) Indicate whether you deny the alleged violations and/or whether you believe that the administrative penalty is excessive. See R.I. Gen. Laws Section 42-17.6-4(b).
- (d) State clearly and concisely the specific issues which are in dispute, the facts in support thereof and the relief sought or involved, if any. See Part 1.7(B) of Rhode Island's *Rules and Regulations for the Administrative Adjudication Division* (250-RICR-10-00-1).
- (2) A copy of each request for hearing must also be forwarded to:

Tricia Quest, Esq.  
RIDEM - Office of Legal Services  
235 Promenade Street, 4<sup>TH</sup> Floor  
Providence, RI 02908-5767

- (3) Each named respondent has the right to be represented by legal counsel at all administrative proceedings relating to this matter.
- (4) Each respondent must file a separate and timely request for an administrative hearing before RIDEM's Administrative Adjudication Division as to each violation alleged in the written NOV. If any respondent fails to request a hearing in the above-described time or manner regarding any violation set forth herein, then the NOV shall automatically become a Final Compliance Order enforceable in Superior Court as to that respondent and/or violation and any associated administrative penalty proposed in the NOV shall be final as to that respondent. See R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 42-17.1-2(21)(i) and (vi) and 42-17.6-4(b) and (c).
- (5) Failure to comply with the NOV may subject each respondent to additional civil and/or criminal penalties.
- (6) An original signed copy of the NOV is being forwarded to the City of Cranston, Rhode Island wherein the Property is located to be recorded in the Office of Land Evidence Records pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 34-13 and Section 42-17.1-2(13), as amended.

- (7) The NOV does not preclude RIDEM from taking any additional enforcement action nor does it preclude any other local, state, or federal governmental entities from initiating enforcement actions based on the acts or omissions described herein.

If you have any legal questions, you may contact (or if you are represented by an attorney, please have your attorney contact) Tricia Quest of RIDEM's Office of Legal Services at (401) 222-6607 ext. 2772408 or at [tricia.quest@dem.ri.gov](mailto:tricia.quest@dem.ri.gov). All other inquiries should be directed to Stephen Tyrrell of RIDEM's Office of Compliance and Inspection at (401) 222-1360 ext. 2777406 or at [stephen.tyrrell@dem.ri.gov](mailto:stephen.tyrrell@dem.ri.gov).

Please be advised that any such inquiries do not postpone, eliminate, or otherwise extend the need for a timely submittal of a written request for a hearing, as described in Section G above.

FOR THE DIRECTOR

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
David E. Chopy, Administrator  
RIDEM Office of Compliance and Inspection

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_  
the within Notice of Violation was forwarded to:

James Decesaris  
36 Fairview Avenue  
Cranston, RI 02905

Marian Decesaris  
36 Fairview Avenue  
Cranston, RI 02905

by Certified Mail.

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# ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY SUMMARY

Program: OWTS  
 File No.: OCI-OWTS-14-264  
 Respondents: James Decesaris and Marian Decesaris

<b>GRAVITY OF VIOLATION</b>					
SEE ATTACHED "PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEETS."					
VIOLATION No. & CITATION	APPLICATION OF MATRIX		PENALTY CALCULATION		AMOUNT
	Type	Deviation	Penalty from Matrix	Number or Duration of Violations	
D (1) and (2) – Failure to abandon cesspool and connect to public sewers/install OWTS	Type I <i>(\$1,000 Max. Penalty) *</i>	Major	\$1,000	9 years	\$9,000
<b><i>SUB-TOTAL</i></b>					<b>\$9,000</b>

\*Maximum Penalties represent the maximum penalty amounts per day, per violation.

## ECONOMIC BENEFIT FROM NONCOMPLIANCE

**COSTS OF COMPLIANCE, EQUIPMENT, O&M, STUDIES OR OTHER DELAYED OR AVOIDED COSTS, INCLUDING INTEREST AND/OR ANY COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE DERIVED OVER ENTITIES THAT COMPLY. NOTE: ECONOMIC BENEFIT MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE PENALTY UNLESS:**

- THERE IS NO IDENTIFIABLE BENEFIT FROM NONCOMPLIANCE, OR
- THE AMOUNT OF ECONOMIC BENEFIT CAN NOT BE QUANTIFIED.

A review of the record in this matter has revealed that Respondents have either enjoyed no identifiable benefit from the noncompliance alleged in this enforcement action or that the amount of economic benefit that may have resulted cannot be quantified.

## COST RECOVERY

**ADDITIONAL OR EXTRAORDINARY COSTS INCURRED BY THE DIRECTOR DURING THE INVESTIGATION, ENFORCEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF AN ENFORCEMENT ACTION (EXCLUDING NON-OVERTIME PERSONNEL COSTS), FOR WHICH THE STATE IS NOT OTHERWISE REIMBURSED.**

A review of the record in this matter has revealed that RIDEM has not incurred any additional or extraordinary costs during the investigation, enforcement, and resolution of this enforcement action (excluding non-overtime personnel costs), for which the State is not otherwise reimbursed.

**TOTAL PENALTY PROPOSED UNDER PENALTY RULES = \$9,000**



# PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEET

CITATION: Failure to abandon cesspool and connect to public sewers/install OWTS  
 VIOLATION NOs.: D (1) and (2)

TYPE		
<u>  X  </u> TYPE I DIRECTLY related to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.	___TYPE II INDIRECTLY related to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.	___TYPE III INCIDENTAL to protecting health, safety, welfare, or environment.
DEVIATION FROM THE STANDARD THE DEGREE TO WHICH A VIOLATION IS OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENT VIOLATED.		
<p><b>FACTORS CONSIDERED:</b></p> <p>Taken from Part 1.10(A)(1)(b) of the Penalty Rules.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>The extent to which the act or failure to act was out of compliance:</b> The Act requires that cesspools located within 200 feet of the inland edge of a shoreline bordering a tidal water area (corresponding to the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council) be properly abandoned and replaced with an approved OWTS or the building served by the cesspool connected to the public sewers. Respondents failed to properly abandon the cesspool and replace the cesspool with an approved OWTS or connect the Dwelling to public sewers.</li> <li>(2) <b>Environmental conditions:</b> The cesspool is in a densely populated neighborhood and within 200 feet of the inland edge of a shoreline bordering a tidal water area (corresponding to the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council).</li> <li>(3) <b>Amount of the pollutant:</b> Considered, but not utilized for this calculation.</li> <li>(4) <b>Toxicity or nature of the pollutant:</b> Wastewater contains many kinds of bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can cause serious or fatal diseases in both humans and animals and contains pollutants that can cause groundwater and surface water impacts.</li> <li>(5) <b>Duration of the violation:</b> 9 years, 10 months – the Act required compliance by January 1, 2014.</li> <li>(6) <b>Areal extent of the violation:</b> Considered, but not utilized for this calculation.</li> <li>(7) <b>Whether the person took reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance:</b> Respondents failed to take reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance despite being advised by RIDEM in the Informal Notice and ECN of the need to comply with the Act.</li> <li>(8) <b>Whether the person has previously failed to comply with any regulations, order, statute, license, permit, or approval issued or adopted by RIDEM, or any law which RIDEM has the authority or responsibility to enforce:</b> Considered, but not utilized for this calculation.</li> <li>(9) <b>The degree of willfulness or negligence, including but not limited to, how much control the violator had over the occurrence of the violation and whether the violation was foreseeable:</b> Respondents had full control over the violation. The violation was foreseeable.</li> <li>(10) <b>Any other factor(s) that may be relevant in determining the amount of a penalty:</b> The ECN stated the penalty could be up to \$1,000 per day.</li> </ol>		
<u>  X  </u> MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR

Penalty Matrix where the applicable statute provides for a civil penalty up to \$1,000		<b>TYPE I</b>	TYPE II	TYPE III
DEVIATION FROM STANDARD	<b>MAJOR</b>	\$800 to \$1,000 <b>\$1,000</b>	\$600 to \$800	\$400 to \$600
	MODERATE	\$600 to \$800	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400
	MINOR	\$400 to \$600	\$200 to \$400	\$100 to \$200