

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

**IN RE: Antonio C. Costa
Luisa M. Costa**

FILE NO.: OCI-OWTS-20-35

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 June 16, 2020, RIDEM issued a Notice of Intent to Enforce (“NOTICE”) to Respondents by certified mail for the violations that are the subject of this Notice of Violation (“NOV”). The NOTICE required specific actions to correct the violations. On December 21, 2020 and June 21, 2022, RIDEM sent letters by certified mail to Respondents. The letters stated that Respondents were in non-compliance with the NOTICE. On July 20, 2021, RIDEM was informed by the city engineer that Respondents applied to connect the plumbing from the dwelling at the property to the city sewers, which was approved. On June 24, 2022, Leonardo Costa (“Costa”) sent electronic correspondence to RIDEM on behalf of Respondents in response to one of the letters. Costa stated that Respondents are his parents and that they do not speak or write English well or at all. Costa requested that RIDEM contact him so that he understands what is required. On or about that same day, RIDEM’s representative spoke with Costa and explained what was required to comply with the NOTICE. On February 14, 2023, RIDEM received electronic correspondence between the city and Costa. The city informed Costa that RIDEM was pressing for a resolution, and Costa responded that he would discuss the matter with his parents, but he didn’t know where the funds would come from to perform the work. As of the date of the NOV, Respondents have failed to comply with the NOTICE.

C. FACTS

- (1) The property is located at 125 Burgess Avenue, Assessor’s Plat 17, Lot 13-007 in East Providence, Rhode Island (“Property”).
- (2) Respondents own the Property.

- (3) On May 28, 2020, RIDEM inspected the Property. The inspection revealed that the onsite wastewater treatment system (“OWTS”) at the Property has failed, and wastewater was discharged from the OWTS to the surface of the ground as evidenced by:
 - (a) Observation of and evidence of the breakout of fluids on the surface of the ground in the area around the OWTS.
 - (b) Photographs showing the breakout of fluids on the surface of the ground in the area around the OWTS.
 - (c) Detection of odors associated with wastewater in the area around the OWTS.
- (4) As of the date of the NOV, Respondents have failed to comply with 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”).

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) **OWTS Rules, Part 6.9(H)** – prohibiting the discharge of wastewater to the surface of the ground.

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** take steps to reduce the discharge of wastewater to the OWTS, such as through the installation and use of water conservation devices and fixtures and arrange to have the OWTS pumped by a permitted septage transporter as frequently as necessary to prevent the OWTS from overflowing or breaking out onto the surface of the ground. A list of permitted septage transporters can be obtained by contacting RIDEM’s Office of Water Resources – OWTS Permitting at 222-6820 or from RIDEM’s web page at: www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/waste/transpor/septage.pdf.
- (2) **IMMEDIATELY** cease use of any/all laundry washing machine(s) located on the Property. No laundry use is allowed until the OWTS is fully repaired.

- (3) **Within 30 days of receipt of the NOV**, retain a licensed OWTS designer to inspect the OWTS to determine the cause of the failure and submit a report of the findings to RIDEM (“System Assessment”). The System Assessment must be signed by the licensed designer who inspected the OWTS, must identify the size and location of the OWTS components, and must set forth the probable cause/s for the failure. If, based on the results of the System Assessment, RIDEM determines that the OWTS requires repair, connect the plumbing for the dwelling on the Property to the public sanitary sewage system **within 60 days of completion of the System Assessment**. **Within 5 days of the connection**, submit proof of the connection to RIDEM (such as a copy of the field inspection card or a contractor’s invoice) and submit proof to RIDEM that the OWTS was properly abandoned in accordance with Part 6.56 of the OWTS Rules. The list of licensed OWTS designers can be obtained from RIDEM’s web page at: www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/licenses/isds/pdfs/deslist.pdf.

OR

In lieu of conducting the System Assessment, **within 60 days of receipt of the NOV**, connect the plumbing for the dwelling on the Property to the public sanitary sewage system. **Within 5 days of the connection**, submit proof of the connection to RIDEM (such as a copy of the field inspection card or a contractor’s invoice) and submit proof to RIDEM that the OWTS was properly abandoned in accordance with Part 6.56 of the OWTS Rules.

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:

\$1,000

- (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. 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.

- (3) 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.
- (4) 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:

Joseph J. LoBianco, Esq.
RIDEM - Office of Legal Services
235 Promenade Street, 4TH 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 East Providence, 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) Joseph J. LoBianco of RIDEM's Office of Legal Services at (401) 537-4412 or at joseph.lobianco@dem.ri.gov. All other inquiries should be directed to Stephen Tyrrell of RIDEM's Office of Compliance and Inspection at (401) 537-4479 or at 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:

Antonio C. Costa
125 Burgess Avenue
East Providence, RI 02914

Luisa M. Costa
125 Burgess Avenue
East Providence, RI 02914

by Certified Mail.



ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY SUMMARY

Program: OWTS
 File No.: OCI-OWTS-20-35
 Respondents: Antonio C. Costa and Luisa M. Costa

GRAVITY OF VIOLATION					
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) – Discharge of wastewater to ground surface	Type I <i>(\$1,000 Max. Penalty) *</i>	Major	\$1,000	1 violation	\$1,000
SUB-TOTAL					\$1,000

*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 = \$1,000

PENALTY MATRIX WORKSHEET

CITATION: Discharge of wastewater to ground surface

VIOLATION NO.: D (1)

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><u>FACTORS CONSIDERED:</u></p> <p>Taken from Part 1.10(A)(1)(b) of the Penalty Rules.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The extent to which the act or failure to act was out of compliance: Wastewater was discharged to the ground surface from a failed OWTS. Preventing the discharge of wastewater to the surface of the ground is a primary objective of the rules and a major objective of the regulatory program. (2) Environmental conditions: The Property includes a single-family home in a densely populated neighborhood. (3) Amount of the pollutant: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (4) Toxicity or nature of the pollutant: Wastewater contains many kinds of bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can cause serious or fatal diseases in both humans and animals, as well as being the source of extremely objectionable odors. (5) Duration of the violation: Full duration unknown. The inspection on May 28, 2020, revealed evidence of wastewater breakout to the surface of the ground. (6) Areal extent of the violation: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (7) Whether the person took reasonable and appropriate steps to prevent and/or mitigate the noncompliance: Respondents failed to have the system pumped as necessary to prevent discharge to the ground surface. (8) 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: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. (9) 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: Respondents had full control over the violation. The violation was foreseeable. (10) Any other factor(s) that may be relevant in determining the amount of a penalty: Considered, but not utilized for this calculation. 		
<u> X </u> MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR

Penalty Matrix where the applicable statute provides for a civil penalty up to \$1,000		TYPE I	TYPE II	TYPE III
DEVIATION FROM STANDARD	MAJOR	\$800 to \$1,000 \$1,000	\$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