Business Item 2025-311

Ratification of Emergency Declaration for Red Dye Release and Roadway Remediation

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Environment Committee: February 10, 2026

Amanda Cerne

Emergency Declaration Process

- Unauthorized industrial discharge identified
- Immediate cleanup contractors mobilized
- Emergency Declaration authorized by Regional Administrator
- Multiple removal methods attempted; ineffective
- Dye continued to re-suspend and spread when wet
- Determined repaving was the only effective remediation, to protect water and assets.
- Cost threshold exceeded → Council ratification required

Incident Overview

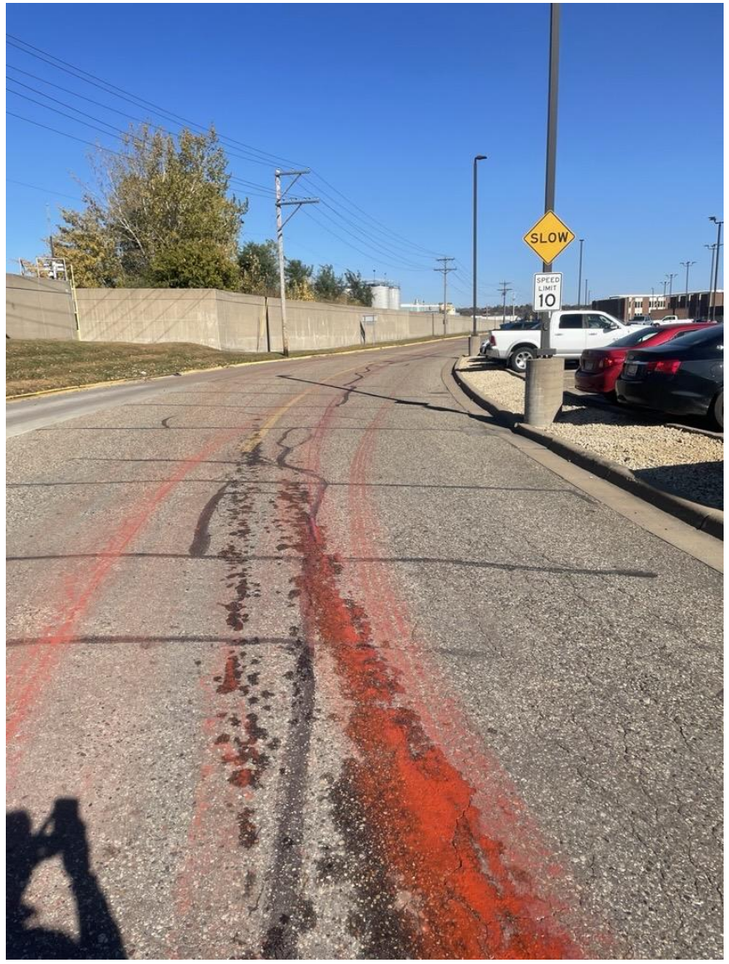
- **October 27:** Industrial hauler discharged unauthorized red dye.
- Second truck intercepted but tracked dye across plant.
- Approximately 3,934 feet of roadway impacted.
- Material identified as iron-oxide red dye (inert but highly visible).
- No material entered the storm sewer system.

Full Timeline of events (10 days)

October 27
•Unauthorized discharge; dye tracked across plant
•Duty Officer, MPCA, MDH notified
•BayWest begins cleanup (minimal progress)
October 28
•Clean Harbors mobilized
•Chemical cleaning restores ~50 ft
•Dye re-suspends with moisture; tracking continues
•5 drums of waste collected
October 29
•Mechanical sweeping tested
•No measurable removal
October 30
•Cleanup paused for evaluation
•Determined dye could not be removed due to repeated re-suspension
October 31
•Decision to mill & overlay impacted roads
•Milling begins
November 5
•Repaving complete
•11,510 square yards of asphalt replaced
•Tracking fully eliminated

INITIAL CLEANUP EFFORTS

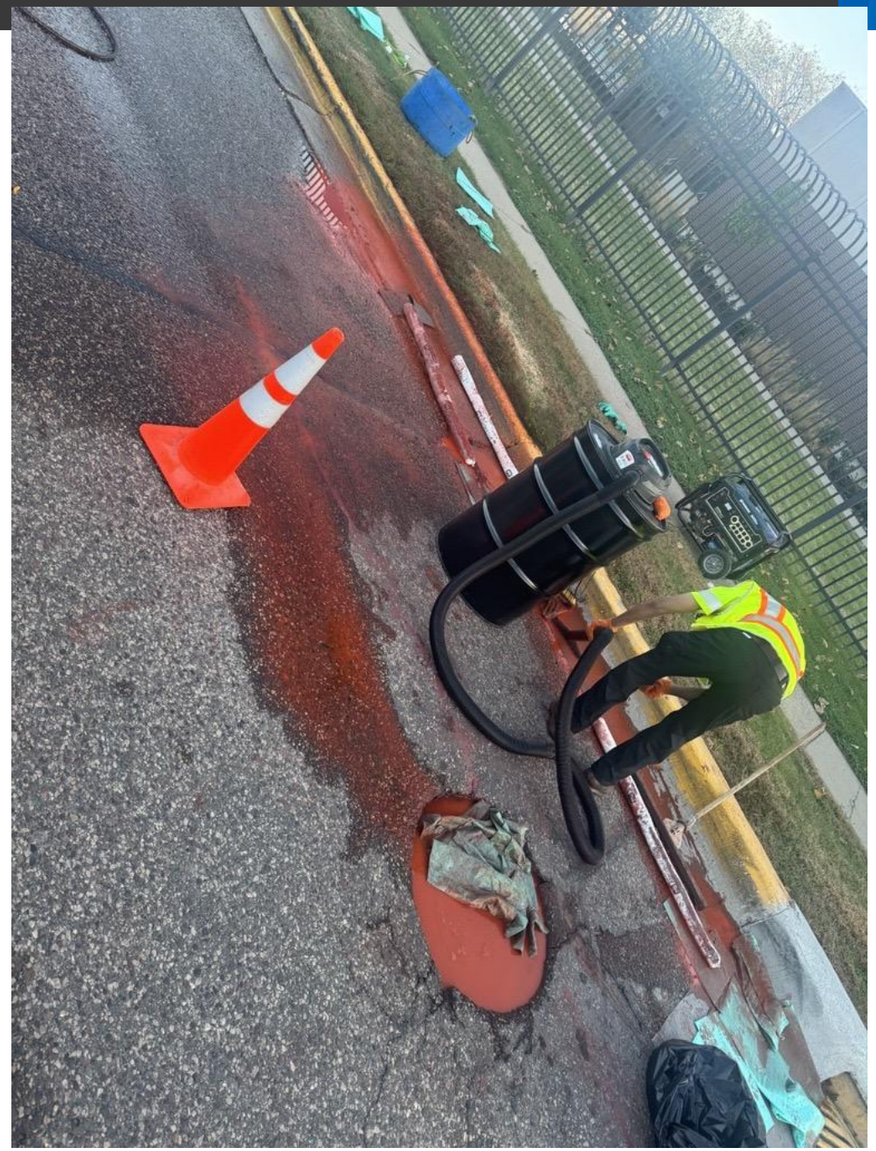
- Vacuum removal
- Surfactant washing
- Chemical cleaning (citric acid)
- Mechanical sweeping
- Only minimal progress achieved
- Dye reappeared whenever pavement became wet
- Tracking continued despite traffic diversion



WHY CLEANUP FAILED

Iron oxide's behavior made cleanup nearly impossible

- Dye is insoluble, but particles are extremely fine.
- Particles lift into suspension when wet, then settle when dry.
- Each moisture event caused dye to re-suspend and spread.
- Traffic re-tracked the particles into new areas.
- High waste volume + low removal showed cleaning was not viable.
- Surface cleaning could not remove or stabilize dye.
- Full removal of the asphalt was the only long-term solution



ROADWAY REMEDIATION (MILL & OVERLAY)

- Emergency milling began October 31
- Removed dye-affected asphalt surface
- 11,510 square yards replaced
- All material properly disposed of.
- Stormwater protections maintained
- Repaving permanently stopped re-suspension and tracking

Cost Summary

- Cleanup attempts: large waste volume, limited removal
- Mechanical sweeping: ineffective
- Iron-oxide re-suspension made surface cleaning non-viable
- Repaving required based on environmental and operational assessment
- Initial Emergency response cost: **$32,521.78**
- **Road Remilling: $256,150**
- Total Cost exceeded $288,6713.78 → Ratification required

PROPOSED ACTION

That the Metropolitan Council ratify the Emergency Declaration for Red dye release and roadway remediation at the Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant, in an amount not to exceed $288,671.78

Childs Road 30 days after event, on first snow fall.

Questions

Amanda Cerne

Director, Environmental Compliance & Safety

612-568-2950

Amanda.Cerne@metc.state.mn.us

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL