



Report on Department of Water Environment Protection Employee Overtime

June 17, 2025

By Onondaga County Comptroller Martin D. Masterpole

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SECTION I

BACKGROUND & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection (WEP) plays a major role in the health of the people who live and work in Onondaga County. WEP has the responsibility of operating and maintaining the system that collects, treats, and discharges sewage generated by domestic, commercial, and industrial properties within Onondaga County's Consolidated Sanitary District. Through their wastewater collection and treatment efforts, WEP decreases public exposure to pathogens and pollutants while also ensuring the water is treated to meet State and Federal standards before being discharged.

WEP services about 75% of the residents in the Onondaga County sewer system. Its workforce is responsible for overseeing more than 31,000 manholes, 400 miles of sewers, 175 pump stations and 102 miles of force mains--pressurized pipelines that use pumps to move wastewater from a lower elevation to a higher elevation. WEP also operates six wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) that collect and treat domestic, commercial, and industrial wastewater.

Plant Facility	Built	Treatment Type	Flow Rate	Water Outfall
Metro Syracuse WWTP	1924	Advanced Tertiary	84 mgd Average/ 240 mgd Capacity	Onondaga Lake
Meadowbrook-Limestone WWTP	1973	Advanced Secondary	4.3 mgd Average/ 6.5 mgd Capacity	Limestone Creek
Brewerton WPCP	1974	Advanced Secondary	1.9 mgd Average/ 3.0 mgd Capacity	Oneida River
Wetzel Road WWTP	1976	Advanced Secondary	3.5 mgd Average/ 10.3 mgd Capacity	Seneca River
Oak Orchard WWTP	1981	Advanced Secondary	5.4 mgd Average/ 10.0 mgd Capacity	Oneida River
Baldwinsville-Seneca Knolls WWTP	1982	Advanced Secondary	3.0 mgd Average/ 9.0 mgd Capacity	Seneca River

mgd = millions of gallons per day

WEP provides a range of additional services for County-owned assets, County-leased assets and/or through municipal service agreements. These services include:

- **Emergency Response:** 24/7 response to sewer backups and other emergencies to minimize disruptions and health risks.
- **Odor Control:** Implementation of measures to minimize odors from wastewater treatment facilities and pump stations, ensuring a pleasant environment for nearby residents.
- **Capacity Assurance:** Evaluation of new sewer service requests to ensure the system can handle additional wastewater flow.

In 2024 WEP had 426 funded positions including a Commissioner and three Deputy Commissioners. 90 of the funded positions were unfilled at the time of the audit. Overtime is to be expected when repairs being made extend beyond the employee's shift and/or when emergencies occur after normal hours or on weekends. WEP's Administration and the Department of Management and Budget factor these situations into the annual budgeting process. In 2024 WEP's

actual overtime was over \$2.1 million, exceeding their adopted budget of \$1.54 million by more than \$600,000.

The increase in Call-in overtime was brought to our attention and is the focus of this audit report. It is our intention to audit other overtime categories in the near future.

The chart below is based on data obtained from HCM, the County's payroll processing system and represents a summary of WEP's overtime for the 26 pay periods recorded in 2024. As illustrated Call-in overtime represents 33% of the total.

2024 Overtime Breakdown		
Overtime Category	2024 Amount	Percentage
Regular OT	1,288,691.07	60%
Call-In OT	710,051.12	33%
Holiday Premium OT	137,439.64	6%
All Other OT	24,737.54	1%
<u>\$ 2,160,919.37</u>		

Illustrated below are WEP's top ten Call-in pay earners by job title and their respective number of employees in those titles.

WEP's Top Ten Job Titles Earning Call-in Pay							
Job Titles	Number of Employees	Call In <2.75	Call In OT	CSEA Call in<4.00	Phone Call	Grand Total	Percentage
Sewer Mtce Crw Ldr	4		\$ 1,358.01	\$ 139,665.22	\$ 1,349.98	\$ 142,373.21	20%
Sewer Mtce Supv	2		2,682.74	86,728.83	4,385.42	93,796.99	13%
Instrument Crew Ldr	1		2,006.49	55,448.05	196.72	57,651.26	8%
Wastew Tr Pl Main Cl	5		4,144.38	37,245.51	1,351.60	42,741.49	6%
Pump Stat Mtc Wkr 2	4		4,242.46	31,100.42	404.52	35,747.40	5%
Head Ww Tr Plant Op	2		3,540.14	20,526.07	5,429.65	29,495.86	4%
Wastew Tr Pl Oper	5		3,468.75	23,244.16	2,693.40	29,406.31	4%
Sewer Mtce Worker 2	12		12,283.60	16,095.78		28,379.38	4%
Pump Station Mainten Wkr 2	2		1,334.86	25,665.18	350.57	27,350.61	4%
Mtce Electrician	4		1,566.98	24,220.68	32.35	25,820.01	4%
Total Top Ten	41	-	\$ 36,628.41	\$ 459,939.90	\$ 16,194.21	\$ 512,762.52	72%
48 Titles - Numerous							
All Other Job Titles	Employees	\$ 14,226.32	\$ 20,453.34	\$ 143,062.33	\$ 19,546.61	\$ 197,288.60	28%
Grand Total		<u>\$ 14,226.32</u>	<u>\$ 57,081.75</u>	<u>\$ 603,002.23</u>	<u>\$ 35,740.82</u>	<u>\$ 710,051.12</u>	<u>100%</u>

Executive Summary

Over the course of the audit we noted the following high level findings:

1. Excessive Call-in overtime is generated by stacking multiple Call-ins with in the same 4 hour Call-in time frame.
2. WEP's administration is not exercising their contractual right to retain employees for the duration of 4 hour Call-in.
3. The County's KRONOS and Sharepoint software systems have limitations for recording instances in which Call-in overtime is necessary.
4. Administration and supervisory review relating to the nature and reason behind the Call-in is antiquated at best.

Our high level recommendations include:

- WEP's administration should exercise their right to retain employees for the duration of the 4 hour Call-in period.
- WEP's administration should work with County Personnel and Information Technology Departments for possible software upgrades and enhancements.
- WEP's administration and supervisors should develop additional Call-in categories to assist with making managerial and oversight decisions.

SECTION II

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope:

WEP's 2024 Call-in overtime and related management oversight.

Our objectives were to:

- Obtain an understanding of the nature of WEP employee Call-in's and their relation to incurring overtime.
- Obtain an understanding of all applicable WEP side bar agreements, union contracts, policies and procedures related to WEP's Call-in practices.
- Determine if Called-in staff time was used effectively and efficiently to minimize overtime compensation.
- Provide WEP's and County administration with recommendations related to Call-in practices to reduce overtime costs.

Methodology:

In order to complete our objective we:

- Reviewed all applicable WEP side bar agreements, union contracts, policies and procedures related to Call-in practices.
- Interviewed selected members of WEP's administration as well as staff responsible for processing the routine Call-in and payroll functions.
- Selected those employees with the highest amount of Call-in overtime and on a test basis determined the extent to which it has effected overtime.
- Reviewed payroll Call-in data entered into Kronos, the County's timekeeping system by WEP's payroll clerks.

SECTION III

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Compensation:

Our understanding of WEP's Call-in compensation is as follows:

- Any type of employee (salaried, hourly) receives 1 hour of pay at their regular rate of pay if they can address the issue over the phone.
- Salaried employees who have to physically be on site will receive 4 hours at their regular rate of pay.
- Hourly (non-salaried) employees who have to physically be on site to address the issue will receive 4 hours of pay at their overtime rate (1.5x's their straight time pay).

Presented below is an excerpt from CSEA's union contract which expires December 31, 2026.

E.	<u>Call-In Pay</u> The County agrees that any employee covered by this agreement who is called into work for emergency duty shall receive the greater of (a) or (b) as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Either a minimum of four (4) hours pay at one and one-half times the regular compensation rate or upon request of the employee and approval of the department head or designee, a minimum of four (4) hours compensatory time at the rate of time and one-half;2. One and one half times the regular compensation rate or compensatory time in accordance with paragraph (A.) of the this article (if classification determined to be non-exempt), or straight time cash or straight time compensatory time in accordance with paragraph (B.) of this article (if classification determined to be exempt), for actual time worked. The County maintains the right to assign or retain any employee for the duration of the call-in duty.
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Procedures:

Our understanding of WEP's Call-in procedures are as follows:

- All emergency calls and alarms are directed to the switchboard at WEP's wastewater treatment plant at Hiawatha Boulevard, which is staffed around-the-clock, 7 days a week by individuals responsible for assessing the nature of the situation and then contacting and directing the most appropriate on-call employee to rectify the matter. They record the time of the call-in/alarm, the name and time of the respective employee dispatched and their own initials in a Metro Telephone Use Log.
- Employees Called-in are responsible to enter a time adjustment request into Sharepoint indicating the hours worked and the nature of their work. (Sharepoint is the County's system used to track hours worked outside of an employee's normal

scheduled work hours. It is an “exception based” tracking system used for recording time off from work).

- WEP supervisors are responsible for reviewing and approving the employee’s Sharepoint entries based on corroborating Call-in tracking sheets as well as cell phone records.
- Payroll clerks enter the approved Call-in hours into two companion County software systems - KRONOS and HCM PeopleSoft--which interface with one another to generate the employees’ paychecks.

1. **Finding:** We noted WEP’s administration is not exercising their right to retain the employees for the entirety of their (4 hour) call-in duty. Instead they allow them to return home upon confirming the issue is resolved. If another emergency arises within the same consecutive 4 hour period, this results in an additional 4 hours of overtime. In, essence, it is treated as an entirely new Call-in. While some overtime is unavoidable given the nature of WEP’s work, this practice results in an unnecessary accumulation of Call-In overtime that could be reduced if managed differently.

Presented below are WEP’s top five earners of Call-in overtime and an estimated savings of \$35,319 if employees were retained during the 4 hour Call-in period. This is based on HCM’s Call-in data obtained for the 26 pay periods recorded in 2024 per the HCM report and analyzing each respective employees KRONOS time punches to determine the number of Call-ins within a consecutive 4 hour period. As illustrated, the Sewer Maintenance Crew Leader A was Called-in 233 times of which 45 times resulted in multiple Call-ins within the same 4 hour period resulting in a cost of \$17,905. If the employees were retained as allowed per the CSEA contract the cost would have been \$7,673 for an estimated savings of \$10,231.

Estimated Savings Retaining Called - in Employees for the Duration of their 4 Hours								
Title	Total # of Call-ins	# of Call-ins within a		Overtime Rate	Cost of NOT Retaining Employees	Call-in Hours IF Retained	Cost if Retained	Estimated Savings IF Retained
		Consecutive 4 hours	Call-in Hours					
Sewer Mtce Crw Ldr A	233	45	420	\$ 42.63	\$ 17,905	180	\$ 7,673	\$ 10,231
Sewer Mtce Crw Ldr B	201	45	392	\$ 47.03	\$ 18,436	180	\$ 8,465	\$ 9,970
Sewer Mtce Supv	294	41	328	\$ 53.38	\$ 17,509	164	\$ 8,754	\$ 8,754
Instrument Crew Ldr	199	30	120	\$ 59.02	\$ 7,082	60	\$ 3,541	\$ 3,541
Sewer Mtce Crw Ldr C	217	29	116	\$ 47.03	\$ 5,455	56	\$ 2,634	\$ 2,822
					<u>\$ 66,387</u>		<u>\$ 31,068</u>	<u>\$ 35,319</u>

This data was derived from HCM report: ON_FUND_REPORT_641020_2024-01-05_2024-12-20 as well as analyzing daily time clock punches in KRONOS.

2. **Finding:** An example of the above occurred on 9/29/24 when a Sewer Maintenance Crew Leader was compensated for 36 hours for 9 Call-ins during a 19 hour consecutive time period

of overtime totaling \$1,693. If WEP's administration had retained the employee for the Call-in duration of 4 hours, the overtime hours earned would have been 16 (not 36) hours and the compensation would have been \$753, a savings to taxpayers of approximately \$940.

One Sewer Maintenance Crew Leader Employee 9/29/2024 Call-Ins & Using Retained Employee Option					
Call-In Number	In Time	Out Time	Actual Time (in hours)	Paid Time (in hours)	If Retained Employee
1	3:40 AM	4:00 AM	0.5	4	4
2	9:00 AM	10:10 AM	1.25	4	4
3	11:15 AM	11:45 AM	0.5	4	
4	1:00 PM	1:40 PM	0.75	4	4
5	2:35 PM	3:30 PM	1	4	
6	4:30 PM	5:00 PM	0.5	4	
7	6:30 PM	7:00 PM	0.5	4	4
8	7:50 PM	8:00 PM	0.5	4	
9	9:20 PM	10:15 PM	1	4	
			6.5	36	16*

* If retained employee, the amount of hours paid would have been 16

Below is a screenshot of the KRONOS time punches for this employee. There are only 4 showing as any call-ins. More than 4 call-ins in a day are not input into KRONOS due to an insufficient amount of posting options.

Date	Schedule	In	Out	Transfer
Sun 9/29		7:00AM		
		9:00AM	10:10AM	///86//;CALLIN 1
		11:15AM	11:45AM	///86//;CALLIN 2
		1:00PM	1:40PM	///86//;CALLIN 3
		2:35PM	3:30PM	///86//;CALLIN 4

Recommendation:

We recommend WEP's administration consider exercising their right as stipulated in the CESA contract to assign or retain any employee for the duration of the call-in duty. Thus avoiding the excessive overtime cost of compounding Call-in pay.

Sharepoint

Per WEP's Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services, employees enter their Call-in hours (hours outside of their normal shift hours) into Sharepoint and then the supervisor verifies and approves the Call-Ins based on tracking sheets and cell phone records. Once approved by a supervisor, the department's payroll clerk is responsible for entering the hours into KRONOS for payment purposes.

We randomly selected pay periods for six employees which equated to 104 Call-ins and reviewed the Metro Call Logs as well as their respective Sharepoint Call-in entries to ascertain if this important internal control was operating as described.

3. **Finding:** We noted 69 of 104 Call-ins entered into Sharepoint could not be supported by a corresponding entry in the Metro Telephone Use Log or any other type of documentation or notations by a supervisor checking the tracking sheets or cell phone records. Therefore it appears this important internal control feature is not operating as indicated or the supervisor is not documenting this review has in fact taken place to verify the call-in. The results are questionable entries into Sharepoint and ultimately unverified payments of approximately \$12,872.

We encountered the following issues in our attempt to match the Sharepoint entries to the Metro Call Logs:

- There was no corresponding entry in the Metro Call Log to verify and support the Sharepoint entry.
- The Metro Call Log noted a different employee was dispatched.
- The Metro Call Log dispatched times did not align with the Sharepoint entry start time.

<u>Unsupported Call-Ins</u>			
<u>Title</u>	<u>Total Number of Call-Ins</u>	<u>Undocumented Call-Ins</u>	<u>Total Paid for Undocumented Call-Ins</u>
Sewer Maintenance Supervisor	17	7	\$ 1,494.86
Sewer Maintenance Supervisor	8	4	\$ 854.20
Sewer Maintenance Crew Leader	22	22	\$ 3,751.36
Sewer Maintenance Crew Leader	12	4	\$ 752.46
Sewer Maintenance Crew Leader	25	14	\$ 2,633.63
Sewer Maintenance Crew Leader	20	18	\$ 3,386.09
Totals	<u>104</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>\$ 12,872.60</u>

4. **Finding:** We noted during our testing numerous instances in which Call-ins were entered into Sharepoint, but they were not recorded (entered) into KRONOS. WEP's administration informed us KRONOS is not capable of recording more than four Call-ins during a 24 hour period and a direct interface (rapid entry) into HCM from Sharepoint is needed to pay the employees. This appears to be a KRONOS system design flaw. The use of this rapid entry is circumventing established review and authorization procedures in KRONOS.

In the audit it was also noted that Sharepoint currently does not have a category in the Time Adjustment Request drop down box labeled as “Call-in”. The menu is generic in nature with “in/out punch” for morning; afternoon; lunch; and “other.” This feature could possible facilitate the supervisory review of an employee’s exceptions to the standard work day with such a designation. In absence of this feature, a required field which should be completed is the “Comments” field, an area where an explanation for working outside of one’s normal work schedule can be entered.

Recommendation:

We recommend WEP’s administration contact the Personnel Department as well as Information Technology to explore the possibilities of software upgrades to allow for unlimited KRONOS Call-in entries and adding a Call-in drop down feature in Sharepoint. This will allow established payroll processing controls to operate efficiently and effectively.

Monitoring Call-ins

We were informed WEP tracks Call-Ins by previously established departmental descriptions using an Excel file. The descriptions with the most Call-ins were denoted as after-hour house calls, emergency manhole repairs and/or responding to alarms at storage facilities.

5. **Finding:** Without any further detail such as, house address, significant rain fall, name of facility and type of alarm and location of man hole, how are WEP’s administrators and supervisors able to better assess the nature of the call-in to determine if some of these might be reoccurring and a more permanent repair or part replacement is needed. A perfect example is having the house address to determine the number of times WEP is called and if further diagnostic work is required to determine if a repair is needed and at whose expense, the County’s or the homeowner’s.

Recommendation:

We recommend WEP’s administration and supervisors consider expanding their Excel file with additional categories and reasons which would assist in analyzing the nature of the Call-ins and making managerial decisions.

SECTION IV MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



J. Ryan McMahon, II, County Executive
Shannon L. Harty, P.E., Commissioner
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June 17, 2025

Martin Masterpole, Comptroller
Office of the Onondaga County Comptroller
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Syracuse, New York 13202

Re: Audit of Department of Water Environment Protection Employee Overtime

Dear Mr. Masterpole:

The Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection (WEP) acknowledges receipt of the draft Audit of the Department of Water Environment Protection Employee Overtime ("Audit") dated May 21, 2025, as completed by your office. We appreciate the efforts undertaken in reviewing and assessing our department's overtime practices.

As outlined in the Audit, WEP personnel provide 24/7 emergency response coverage across both the Consolidated Sanitary District and the four Drainage Districts. These responsibilities necessitate various forms of overtime, including phone support, call-ins, and extended work hours. All overtime activity is governed by New York State Labor Law, Onondaga County administrative policies, and applicable provisions of the CSEA collective bargaining agreements. Employees are required to submit exception reports to document work performed outside of their normal schedule and to accurately apply the appropriate pay codes.

Historically, WEP employees submitted these exception reports in hard copy. Given the department's size and the frequency of after-hours alarms and emergency responses, this manual process placed a significant burden on our payroll staff and did not offer adequate tools for oversight or reporting.

Recognizing the need for improved management of payroll expenses, particularly overtime, WEP has worked collaboratively with the County Personnel and Information Technology Departments over the past several years to modernize our payroll processes. Recently, all WEP employees transitioned to an electronic exception reporting system via a SharePoint platform. This transition has led to measurable improvements in our ability to track and manage overtime.

The next phase of this initiative is currently underway. WEP is actively working with Personnel and IT to optimize the utilization of SharePoint and Kronos. These efforts will enhance coordination, support ongoing review, and ensure compliance with all applicable regulations, policies, and collective bargaining agreements. Our goal is to ensure that all overtime is appropriately documented and justified, and to prevent any improper or extraneous overtime payments. To that end, the following responses are provided to each of the findings and recommendations presented in the draft Audit:

1 - WEP's administration exercise their right to retain employees for the duration of the 4 hour Call-in period.

We recommend WEP's administration consider exercising their right as stipulated in the CESA contract to assign or retain any employee for the duration of the call-in duty. Thus avoiding the excessive overtime cost of compounding Call-in pay

WEP Response: *WEP agrees with this recommendation. In response to this Audit, WEP reviewed all pay periods in 2025 and found similar instances of overpayment that were found in the audit. Effective with Payroll PP11 (5/17 – 5/30) WEP will not pay for more than one call-in in a 4-hour period, eliminating excessive overtime costs due to compounding payments. WEP management and Onondaga County Personnel met with CSEA on June 9, 2025, to explain this. An internal memo was issued to all WEP employees on 6/10/25 to state the enforcement of 4-hour call-in policy. In addition, WEP Management will monitor and audit each future payroll to ensure that this does not reoccur.*

2 - WEP's administration contact Personnel and Information Technology for possible software upgrades and enhancements.

We recommend WEP's administration contact the Personnel Department as well as Information Technology to explore the possibilities of software upgrades to allow for unlimited KRONOS Call-in entries and adding a Call-in drop down feature in Sharepoint. This will allow established payroll processing controls to operate efficiently and effectively.

WEP Response: *WEP agrees there is not consistent tracking on KRONOS call-in entries and corresponding choices in Sharepoint. WEP will review this portion of the audit with County Personnel Payroll and IT to explore enhancements and/or modifications to these systems.*

3- WEP's administration and supervisors should develop additional Call-in categories to assist with making managerial and oversight decisions.

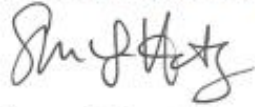
We recommend WEP's administration and supervisors consider expanding their Excel file with additional categories and reasons which would assist in analyzing the nature of the Call-ins and making managerial decisions.

WEP Response: *WEP acknowledges the inconsistencies of tracking Call-in categories and nature of call ins. WEP is exploring reporting needs and identifying data gaps needed to gain consistency in analysis and enforcement across the department.*

We are committed to continuous improvement and welcome the Audit's findings as part of that process. If you have any questions, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

ONONDAGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon L. Harty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shannon" and last name "Harty" clearly distinguishable.

Shannon L. Harty, P.E.
Commissioner

CC: Martha Hennigan, Deputy Commissioner of Administration
Carl Hummel, Commissioner, Personnel Department
Kevin Sexton, Chief Information Officer