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Schneider's won't get rebate over blood spilled into sewer

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Record staff

It was "a coincidence" that Waterloo Region tested J.M. Schneider Inc's waste water discharge just after several accidental blood spills into the sewage system last spring, the company's executives said Wednesday.

"This period of time is highly unusual," said Bob Tiffin, the national quality assurance manager for the Kitchener meatpacking company. "It's not typical of our history and our operation."

But that didn't convince Waterloo Region's engineering committee, which refused to rebate any of the \$222,970 sewage charge Schneider's paid for the discharged wastes.

The committee split 4-4 on a motion to give Schneider's a \$73,354 rebate on its sewage charge, which meant the motion was defeated. Earlier it rejected a staff recommendation to give the company a \$156,708 rebate.

Regional council will discuss the issue at its next meeting and may take a different stand.

"We don't hear about spills unless they occur when we have tested," said Kitchener Ald. Jim Ziegler. "There are other times that we don't know about that have affected the

effluent. There has been since September 1987 numerous spills that haven't occurred near testing days."

Four tests conducted on the company's waste discharge in April, May and June last year showed average biochemical oxygen demand of 2,178 parts per million and an average suspended solids measure of 1,412 parts per million. The historical average for the company is an oxygen demand of 675 ppm and suspended solid measure of 550 ppm.

Schneider's regularly pays a surcharge when its discharges into the sanitary sewer system exceed the region's limit for suspended solids (TSS) and biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) – a measure of the oxygen the region needs to supply to reduce the waste in the effluent when it reaches the Kitchener sewage treatment plant.

Two of the tests were taken on the same day that a blood spill had occurred while the other two tests were taken the day after a spill. There were also two other spills in that time period.

"It appears to be a coincidence that the spills occurred on the regional testing days," Tiffin said. "The high-strength discharges

were not continuous for the entire quarter."

Schneider's had asked for a rebate, arguing the surcharge assumes high levels of waste in the effluent for the entire quarter, rather than just on the testing days.

The request was supported by members of the engineering department staff.

On those (testing) days, the company had manufacturing problems which overwhelmed the system," Ralph Luhowy, waste-water operations manager, told the committee. He said the company would not keep operating while spilling blood because it is used in a number of products.

Tiffin said Schneider's has begun a daily sampling program of its sewage discharge and has purchased a blood-holding tank to avoid the overflows that caused the spills.

He said company executives were "surprised" to find out about the blood spills, the failure to report them and the failure to communicate with the regional laboratory.

Waterloo Coun. Susan Forwell said that while she was willing to give the company the "benefit of the doubt," she would not do so the next time it had problems.