

REFERENCE

2526251

RELEASE DATE

October 2025

SUBJECT

Various queries related to storm and sewage overflows, including information on EDM monitors.

RESPONSE

NI Water operates a wastewater system which comprises a mixture of sewers which collect foul wastewater only and sewers which collect both foul and stormwater (combined system). Overflows from a system which collects only foul wastewater are designated emergency overflows, whilst storm overflows are those from a combined system.

The publication of spill data from overflows is undertaken on an annual calendar year basis. This involves staff from across the business to review data and will allow discovery of emerging trends in poorly performing assets. NI Water is currently assessing the data being returned and is developing a programme to prioritise and target investigations and interventions.

NI Water is currently working in a challenging funding environment and frequently relies on additional budget being allocated to it during Northern Ireland Executive Monitoring Rounds to cover operating costs. In addition, NI Water deals with over 12,000 blockages in the wastewater system each year which can occasionally result in spills from overflows.

NI Water replies to each of your queries in turn as follows.

- 1. Please can you confirm how many of your emergency sewage overflows now have a monitor installed? (not the storm overflows). Please can you confirm the total of emergency sewage overflows in Northern Ireland?***

NI Water currently has 2,430 overflows;

- I. 1,258 are designated combined sewer overflows. For the purposes of this response, NI Water assumes that this category matches your reference to 'storm overflows'.
- II. 674 are designated as emergency overflows.
- III. 498 are designated as having a combined sewer overflow and an emergency overflow. For the purposes of this response, NI Water assumes that this category matches your reference to 'storm overflows'.

Of the 674 emergency overflows, 108 have monitors installed which have been sufficiently verified to support effective use for operational maintenance and monitoring. Of these, 29 have been fully quality assured for both operational maintenance and release of spill count data to the public.

2. How many are there that have still not had a monitor installed?

NI Water has 566 emergency overflows (referencing subset II above) that do not have verified monitors.

3. How many are there that have been granted an exemption from having a monitor?

Some older overflows do not have permits requiring a monitor to be installed, whilst more recent overflows do have a requirement for a monitor. NI Water is taking a phased approach to Event Duration Monitor (EDM) installation as agreed with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). NI Water is committed to increasing the number of overflows with EDMs, funding permitting.

Notwithstanding the comment above, no overflow has an exemption from having a monitor.

4. Can you confirm how many of these emergency storm overflows have spilled this year? Please can you provide location and spill duration?

2025 EDM data will be published as part of annual EDM reporting in early 2026; NI Water does not have fully verified data for spills for the year 2025.

Annex A (attached) shows the 29 emergency overflows (referencing subset II in Question 1 above) with fully quality assured data for 2024 including the total duration of spills.

5. Please can you confirm if you have installed monitors on any unpermitted emergency overflows? Please can you confirm their location and why if these have not had monitors installed?

NI Water operates a number of emergency overflows which are unconsented. As NI Water becomes aware of an unconsented overflow, it is added to a register and shared with the NIEA; consent requests for these overflows are currently being progressed with the NIEA.

NI Water has installed* 32 monitors on unconsented emergency overflows. (*This being monitors that are sufficiently verified to support effective use for operational maintenance and monitoring.)

Annex A shows the location of the unconsented emergency overflows without monitors. NI Water is taking a phased approach to EDM installation as agreed with the NIEA. Our initial focus has been to install EDMs on overflows which spill into Northern Ireland's 26 designated bathing waters. To date, we have EDMs located in 22 of the 26 designated bathing waters. More recently, we have extended our coverage of EDMs to storm overflows that spill into waterbodies which support shellfish growth and production and other sensitive inland waterbodies and rivers.

6. Please can you confirm how many of your storm overflow now have monitors installed as of August 2025?

Of the 1,756 combined storm overflows (subsets I & III, Q1), 515 have monitors installed which have been sufficiently verified to support effective use for operational maintenance and monitoring.

7. Please can you confirm how many storm overflows have not had a monitor installed as of August 2025?

Of the 1,756 storm overflows, 1,241 do not have monitors installed.

8. Please can you confirm how many are exempt from monitors, eg due to locations etc?

Some older overflows do not have permits requiring a monitor to be installed, whilst more recent overflows do have a requirement for a monitor. NI Water is taking a phased approach to EDM installation as agreed with the NIEA. NI Water is committed to increasing the number of overflows with EDMs, funding permitting.

Notwithstanding the comment above, no overflow has an exemption from having a monitor.