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Laguna plant fined for wastewater violations

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SANTA ROSA — The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board has fined Santa Rosa \$100,000 for violations at its sewage treatment plant on the Laguna.

The fines, levied on Oct. 27, stem from 317 violations over five years, including spilling untreated sewage into the Laguna, discharging more treated sewage into the Laguna than it is allowed, discharging into the Russian River during summer and fall, discharge onto land the city does not own, inadequate treatment of wastewater and releasing too-warm water into the Laguna.

Major violations included 14 raw sewage overflows into the Laguna and Russian River and

43 water spills from broken irrigation equipment, according to a Water Quality Control Board report.

Sebastopol sends its sewage to the Laguna plant for disposal, Sebastopol ratepayers will not see their rates rise much because of the fine, said Sebastopol Finance Director Ron Puccinelli.

"The rates are set once a year unless something really big happens," Puccinelli explained. "This fine may go into next year's rate calculations, but it's not really significant. Their total budget is \$10 million a year."

"Some of these violations have already led to upgrades and improvements," said Lee Michlin, executive director of the water board.