# Sanitary Engineer Expert Witness for Sewer and Wastewater System Failures

*Bonneau Dickson, PE, Brings Over Six Decades of Water and Wastewater Engineering Experience to Litigation, Insurance, and Property Disputes*


forensic engineering


wastewater system failures

BERKELEY, CA, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Bonneau Dickson, PE, a sanitary engineer and sole practitioner based in Berkeley, California, offers forensic engineering and expert witness services in cases involving sewer, wastewater, septic, and stormwater system failures. Sanitary engineering is a specialized branch of civil engineering focused on the design, operation, and maintenance of water and wastewater systems. Dickson has worked independently since 1993, drawing on a career that spans more than six decades of engineering practice in the United States and abroad.

As a sanitary engineer expert witness for sewer and wastewater system failures, He applied engineering experience to questions about how a system was designed, constructed, operated, maintained, or affected by changing conditions. His role in a legal matter is to examine the available technical evidence, identify the engineering issues that can be supported by that evidence, and explain those issues in language that attorneys, decision-makers, and juries can understand.

A Dual Role: Engineer and Forensic Analyst

Dickson's practice is built around two areas of focus. As a consulting engineer, he has

participated in the design of approximately 300 water, wastewater, and stormwater projects, ranging from individual septic tanks and wells to large-scale treatment facilities, and has served as project manager on roughly 175 of those projects. His design and construction background includes water lines, sewers, pump stations, and wells, along with experience as both project manager and construction inspector.


stormwater


wastewater pumps

As a forensic analyst and expert witness, Dickson assists litigators, insurance companies, and other parties in resolving disputes involving sewage, wastewater, septic systems, and stormwater. In this capacity, he translates technical engineering issues into terms that can be understood by attorneys and juries who may not have a background in civil or sanitary engineering. He has served as a forensic technical consultant or expert witness in more than 100 legal matters over more than 25 years.

Areas of Expert Witness Service

Dickson's expert witness work spans a range of matters connected to sewer and wastewater system failures, including:

- Septic tank failures and cases involving non-disclosure of a septic system to a property buyer
- Sewage backups into buildings and residential structures
- Failed pump stations and sewer pipe systems
- Water distribution system failures
- Mold and water damage resulting from wastewater leakage into buildings

In sewage overflow matters, Dickson's analysis often addresses whether a sewerage authority followed its established sewer maintenance plan and whether any departure from that plan contributed to a blockage or overflow. In septic system matters, his work often involves evaluating whether problems with a septic system, or the existence of the system itself, were disclosed during a property transaction.

Litigation and Claims Support

In his role as an expert witness, Dickson works with attorneys and insurance representatives to evaluate the technical facts underlying a claim or lawsuit and to prepare findings that can be presented in a legal setting, whether through written reports, deposition testimony, or courtroom testimony. Because sewer, wastewater, septic, and stormwater failures often involve engineering concepts unfamiliar to non-specialists, his role includes explaining the relevant technical standards, system design principles, and maintenance practices in terms accessible to attorneys, judges, and jurors.

## Case Example: New England Wastewater Pump Station

One matter illustrates the type of technical analysis Dickson provides to clients facing infrastructure failures. A New England city retained him after six large wastewater pumps at one of its pump stations began failing only four months after being placed into service, well short of their expected operating life. Dickson evaluated the pumps, the conditions under which they were operating, and the pattern of repeated failures to determine the underlying cause of the problem.

Based on that analysis, Dickson's findings supported a recommendation to replace the pumps rather than continue a cycle of individual repairs. The city adopted this approach, which addressed the recurring failures and reduced the ongoing costs associated with piecemeal repair work. The matter reflects the kind of technical evaluation Dickson applies in pump station and wastewater infrastructure cases, where distinguishing between a design defect, an installation issue, and normal equipment wear can determine how a claim or dispute is resolved.

## Engineering and Consulting Background

Dickson's consulting engineering work has included the design of wastewater treatment facilities, wastewater pump stations, sewers, and potable water facilities.

Dickson holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a Master of Science in Sanitary Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology, a Master of Arts in Sanitary Engineering from Harvard University, and a Master of Business Administration from Harvard Business School. He is registered as a Civil Engineer in California, the designation under which sanitary engineers are registered in most states. He is affiliated with several industry organizations, including the Water Environment Federation, the American Water Works Association, and the National Onsite Wastewater Association.

His engineering career has included approximately seven years of international project work in Vietnam, Egypt, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Tunisia, and Rwanda, in addition to an extended period with Harris & Associates, a civil engineering firm based in Concord, California.

## Guidance for Property Owners

Dickson's work with litigators and insurers has also informed guidance he shares with homeowners regarding sewer and septic system maintenance. Septic tanks that are not pumped on a regular basis, approximately once every five years, can allow solids and grease to reach the

leach field, leading to clogging and potentially costly repairs.

Homeowners are also advised to check whether the lowest plumbing-connected floor of a residence sits below the elevation of the next upstream manhole, a condition that can create a risk of sewage backup; many sewerage agencies offer free inspections to evaluate this risk. In property transactions, sellers are expected to disclose the existence of a septic system and any known problems with it; failure to make such a disclosure is a common basis for subsequent litigation.

About Bonneau Dickson, PE
Bonneau Dickson, PE is an independent consulting sanitary engineering practice based in Berkeley, California. Dickson has worked independently since 1993 and provides engineering consulting, forensic analysis, and expert witness services involving water, wastewater, stormwater, septic systems, sewers, pump stations, and related civil infrastructure.

His professional background includes more than four decades of water, wastewater, and stormwater engineering experience and more than 25 years of forensic and expert witness work. His project experience encompasses water and wastewater system design, construction, inspection, project management, system evaluation, and forensic investigation.

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