

HOW TO PREVENT BACKUPS IN YOUR SANITARY SERVICE AND MAIN LINE SEWER

Fortunately, property owners can do many things to prevent their sewer service from backing up. These tips can help to prevent backups in the main sewer line as well. If everyone would be careful about how they dispose of certain products, our systems would be a great deal more efficient, cause fewer backups, cost us all less money to maintain, and prevent a lot of distress.

Grease: Cooking oil should be poured into a heat-resistant container and disposed of in the garbage, not the drain. Some people assume that washing grease down the drain with hot water is acceptable. As grease goes down the drain, it cools off and solidifies, either in the drain, the property owner's sewer service, or in the main sewer. When this happens, the line constricts, and eventually clogs.

"Flushable" Paper Products: Paper towels, disposable and cloth diapers, sanitary or baby wipes, feminine products and applicators, and dental floss, are examples of items that should be thrown in the garbage, not flushed down the toilet. Although some of these products may be labeled as "flushable" on the package, they do not deteriorate as does toilet paper and bathroom tissue. They become lodged in service lateral, main lines, and pumps, causing sewer backups.

Needles: Unfortunately, some people dispose of hypodermic needles in the sewer system. The presence of these needles in the wastewater collection system presents special and possible deadly problems for wastewater collection and wastewater treatment employees. PLEASE DO NOT FLUSH NEEDLES.

The proper method of disposal is to re-cap the needle and put it into a "sharps container". This could be any rigid plastic container such as an empty bleach bottle. When it is full, tape the container securely, and call your local pharmacy for advice on proper disposal methods.

Roots: Shrubs and trees, seeking moisture, will make their way into open sewer joints and sewer line cracks. These roots can cause extensive damage. They may start out small, getting into a small joint opening or crack in the pipe; but as the tree or shrub continues to grow, so does the root. After time, this causes your sewer line to break, which in turn allows debris into the line causing a backup. One way to prevent roots from entering your line is to be careful about planting trees and greenery around your sewer line.

Illegal Plumbing Connections: DO NOT connect foundation drains, sump pumps and other storm water systems to your sanitary sewer. Foundation drains use underground perforated drain pipes or rock filled wells to distribute storm or groundwater water over a wide area that then infiltrates into the ground. It is illegal, and the clean water that these items contribute will overwhelm your lateral and could cause a sewer back-up. Please consult a plumber or the Public Works Department to correct any illegal connections.

Hazardous Material: Never dispose of any flammable or hazardous material, paints and thinners, herbicides, motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, fuel, or solvents, etc., down the drain or toilet. Discharge of these materials is not only damaging, but may be dangerous and illegal.

Sewer Odor: Another concern that property owners have is that they can smell sewer odors inside their home or building. There are many ways to prevent this from occurring. Under each drain in your plumbing system, there should be a "P-trap". If there is water in this fixture, odor or gases from the sewer are blocked and cannot enter the building. Periodically, pour water into unused floor drains, sinks, etc., that are not regularly used. Also, check toilets to see that wax rings are installed. Another way to prevent sewer odor is to ensure that the vents, which are located on your roof, are free from bird nests, leaves, etc. When these vents are clear, the sewer odors will escape through these vents.