



Facts About Sewer Backups

Sewer blockages/backups are a common problem in U.S. cities and towns. These are typically indicated by water coming out of bathtub drains, shower drains and basement drains or possibly manholes.

City personnel will check for blockages in the main line. Any blockage in the main line that is located will be cleared. If cleanouts have been installed by the City at your property, personnel will also check the service line to your home or business. However, maintenance and repair of the lines located on the property or interior lines are the owner's responsibility.

If you suspect a main line or service line (between house and street) problem, call the City's Public Works Department at (270) 765-6121. Personnel are available 24 hours/day – 7 days a week.

Is there anything I can do to prevent or make less likely a sewer backup into my home?

- Avoid putting grease down your garbage disposal or household drain. It will solidify, collect debris and accumulate in city lines, or build up in your sewer service line.
- Never flush disposal diapers, sanitary napkins, or paper towels down the toilet. They can block your lines and may damage your plumbing system.
- The roots of large shrubs or trees near the service line can block pipes. Removing the tree or shrub can help reduce root problems. You can call the sewer department for assistance in locating where the service line connects to the City's sewer main. A plumber may also be needed to help determine the service line location.
- One way to prevent sewage backup through basement drains is to install a "Back Flow Valve" on the lowest drain(s). You may also use a plumber's test plug to close these drains when not in use.

Please Note:

Court cases have determined that a city is not automatically liable for sewer backup damages. It may be if, and only if, the city's negligence caused the damages. There are four basic questions that the courts look at in deciding this issue. The city could be liable if the answer to all four questions is yes.

- 1. Was there a defect in the city's sewer line?** This might include a sag or break in the line, or failure due to construction or design.
- 2. Did the city know, or should the city have known, about the defect?** For example, were there previous complaints or reports of problems, or should the problem have been discovered during routine inspection or maintenance of the lines?
- 3. Did the city fail to correct the defect within a reasonable time after learning of it?**
- 4. Did the failure by the city cause damages?**

Many homeowners insurance policies exclude damage resulting from sewer backups. However, some insurance companies do provide sewer backup coverage. Therefore, it is possible for homeowners to protect against this risk. Check with your agent.