

# FAQs About Sewer Backups

## 1. What should I do if sewage backs up into my house?

The back-up of sewage through the drains in your home or business is an unpleasant prospect. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to protect your property.

First, an easy lesson in basic plumbing.

Wastewater flows through small lines on your property to the larger, city lines in the street. From there the sewage travels by gravity or pressure to the wastewater treatment facility. The stream is constant, with peaks in the morning and evening. Each day millions of gallons of wastewater safely reaches the city's treatment facilities to be reclaimed and returned to the environment.

Unfortunately, a blockage in the sewer line can interfere with this normally quiet, out-of-sight process. A blockage in the private or city line causes a back-up through floor drains and toilets at the lowest point in your home or business. The overflow will continue until the blockage is removed or until sewage is no longer entering the line.

The Department of Public Works combines educational efforts with regular maintenance and investigative practices to prevent blockages. Customer information, public presentations, and school programs help our customers understand what can safely be disposed of down the drain. The Infiltration/Inflow program identifies problems that allows us to schedule repairs, and manage the rehabilitation programs on over 114 miles of city sewer lines.

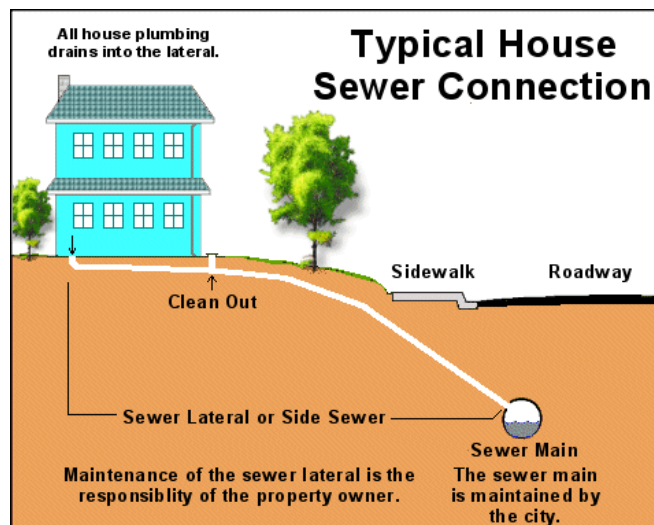
### IF AN OVERFLOW OCCURS:

**Call our Emergency Service number at: 317-736-3648**

An emergency crew will be able to determine if the blockage is in the customer's line or in the city line. If the blockage is in the city line, the crew will be able to break the blockage, ending the back up.

If the blockage is in the customer's line, you will need to call a plumber to assist you.

**Discontinue inside water use.**



## **2. What Causes a Sewer Back-up?**

Anything that should not be in a sewer line has the potential of causing a blockage. For example:

- Kitchen grease, disposable diapers, and sanitary napkins can accumulate and cause a blockage.
- Tree roots seeking moisture can grow through cracks in the lines, causing a blockage.
- Illegal hookups allow excess water into the lines. Outside stairwell drains, sump pumps, roof leaders and drain gutters should never be connected to the sewer system. A sewer system is designed to carry a predetermined amount of sewage. Rainwater not only overloads the system, but also raises the cost of the treatment process.

## **3. What Can I Do To Prevent Back-ups?**

To protect your property follow these simple Dos and Don'ts.

### **DON'T**

- Put diapers or sanitary napkins in the toilet
- Dispose of grease down the drain
- Plant trees near sewer lines
- Connect any drains or sump pumps to the sewer system

### **DO**

- Install a plumbers test plug (available at hardware stores) at the lowest floor drain in your home
- Hire a plumber to install a backflow valve on the lowest drain line. Regularly inspect and maintain the valve
- Modify the plumbing line so that water is pumped to an upper level drain, eliminating the drains at the lower level

### **AND, JUST IN CASE**

- Locate and keep accessible the sewer cleanout in your front yard. If you do not have a cleanout, have one installed by a plumber. The cleanout is the property owner's responsibility.
- Check your homeowners' insurance policy. If you are not covered for back-ups, call your agent for information on costs and coverage options.
- If you experience a back up, save all receipts related to any repair, cleaning, or damages.

**Remember; if you experience a sewer line blockage call us first at 317-736-3648.** This could save the unnecessary expense of a plumber.