

Sewer Backups

U T I L I T I E S

What if my sewer backs up?

Sewer backups are usually unexpected and always create a mess. At best the backup requires unpleasant cleanup and sometimes expensive damage. When this happens, our customers have questions. If you are having a problem, call us so we can check the main line before you call a plumber.

Who is going to fix the problem?

That depends on whether the stoppage is in your private line or the City main. If it is in the City main, we fix it as quickly as possible and keep you informed about what's being done.

If the problem is with the private line connecting your house to the City main, we'll tell you so you can get it fixed. It is against the law for the City to work on private property.

Who is going to pay for this?

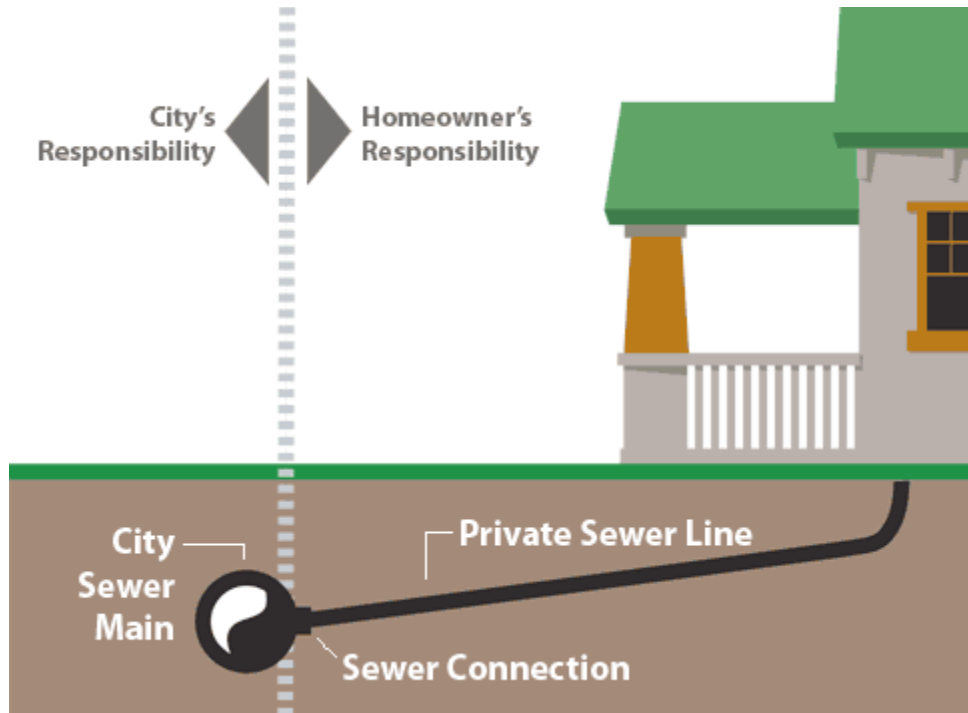
You have to pay the bill. This is why it is important to make sure your homeowner's insurance covers sewer backups.

Is this City policy or law?

This is law. Public funds can't be spent for private purposes.

The City is only responsible for its own property – not your line or connection to the main.

The City can only be held liable for damages if we knew we had a problem and didn't fix it in a reasonable time.



Homeowner's responsibility for a sewer line extends past the property line and all the way to where the sewer ties into the City main.

Install a backflow valve to prevent backups

City recommends a backflow valve on all new and newly-repaired sewer lines. But you can have a plumber add a backflow valve to your line right now. It's the best protection against sewer backups.



A backflow valve can stop sewage from backing up into your home.
Clean it periodically to keep it working.

The valve closes when water comes into it from the wrong direction.
If a clog occurs, the backflow valve will stop the sewage from backing up into your house.

If you are downhill from the sewer main, be sure a backflow valve has been put on your sewer line – especially if your house is in an older area of the city.

Even if your house is in a borderline location, installing a backflow valve may be a good precaution. Once the valve is installed, clean it periodically to keep it working right. Talk to your plumber about the installation and cleaning or call Customer Service.

Make sure you have proper insurance

Sewer backups are not automatically covered by all homeowner's insurance policies. Check your policy to make sure you are covered for damages due to sewer backup.

Don't assume you're covered! You may need a special option for coverage. Talk to your insurance agent.

Avoid future backups

Dispose of grease and fats with your trash, not down the drain. Even if you run it through a garbage disposal, grease in drains can collect and harden into a plug.

Plant trees and large shrubs away from sewer lines. Roots grow toward breaks or cracks in lines. When roots get inside the pipe, they clog it.

Never connect sump pumps, French drains or other flood control systems to your sanitary sewer. It's illegal and the debris and silt will clog your line. Call a plumber to undo illegal connections.

Keep all caps on cleanouts. This is done to keep objects from clogging your line, to help keep storm water out of our mains letting customer's lines flow freely. This is one way to help the quality of your service.