

FAQ: Sewer Backups

Sewer backups are common but unfortunate problems that occur across the country, including Homewood. Although the Village of Homewood, Department of Public Works, makes every effort to prevent such incidents, backups can still occur. In the event you experience a sewer backup that you believe is coming from the Village's main sewer line, please call 708-206-3470 or 911 immediately for assistance. The following information is provided to help answer possible questions and provide you with the steps to take if such a problem occurs on your property.

Question: What causes a sewer backup?

Answer: Clogs or blockages in a sewer line can be caused by materials settling in the pipe, and in turn partially or completely block the sewer pipe. Such blockages can occur either in the Village's main sewer line or in the private sewer service line, which the property owner owns and maintains. The private line, also known as the lateral line, connects your home or building to the public sewer system. Wastewater from your sinks, showers, toilets, dishwashers, and washing machines flows through the lateral line to the public sewer system. Lateral lines can be blocked or obstructed by items flushed down the toilet or washed down the drain, as well as tree roots, grease and other obstructions.

Other causes of sewer backups may include pipe breaks or cracks, tree roots, sewer system deterioration or construction mishaps. When it comes to tree roots, help us help you by making sure not to plant new trees or shrubs over or near your home's sewer. Downspouts are sometimes tied directly into building sewer pipes, (which is now illegal) especially in older neighborhoods. Rain water drains directly from roofs into the sanitary sewer system through these connectors. These downspout connections often allow water from rain storms to exceed the capacity of the sewer pipes. Sanitary sewer systems are not designed for excess flow. Customers in older neighborhoods with downspouts connected to their home's sewer system should disconnect their downspouts from the sewer. Contact Public Works at 708-206-3470 if this is a concern.

Question: How can I tell if my private sewer line is blocked or damaged?

Answer: Some signs include slow draining, water pooling around basement flood drains, sewage smells inside or outside the building, wastewater leaking from cleanouts, (commonly located in the basement, crawl space or yard) and wet ground in your yard.

Question: What is my responsibility as a homeowner?

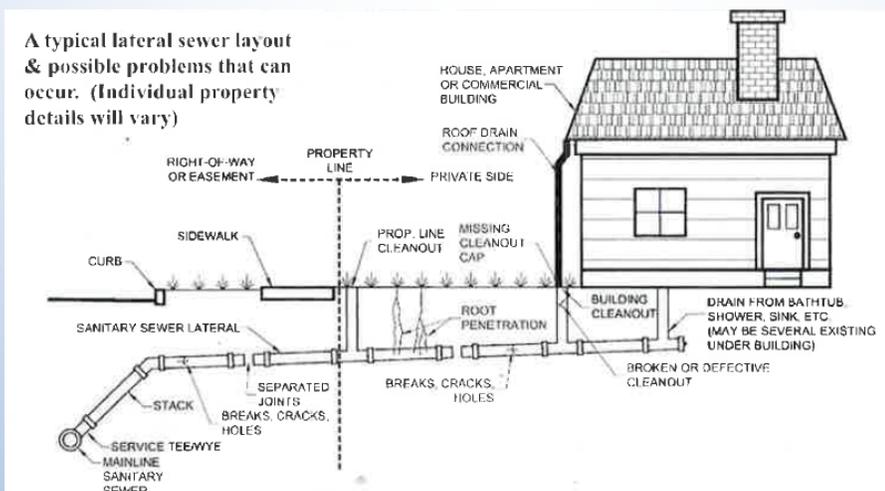
Answer: Homeowners own the private sewer line from the house to the Village's main sewer line and are responsible for its maintenance.

FAQ: Sewer Backups

Question: What should I do if there is a backup?

Answer: Contact a private sewer drain cleaning company to clear any internal drain lines and to clear the private sewer line from your home to the connection on the Village main line. The private main line must be cleared with a 4"-6" double blade. Once the private sewer line is cleared to the Village's main sewer line and all roots, grease and debris have been removed, then the private line should drain as normal. This should be done AFTER contacting Public Works to investigate the issue.

If the plumber determines the private sewer service line is broken or collapsed on the Village's right-of-way or easement, the plumbing company must contact the Homewood Building Department at 708-206-3858.



The homeowner is responsible for the private line located from the home to the Village's main sewer line. If you are experiencing a backup in your sewer line contact Public Works first.

Question: Who will make the repair?

Answer: Homeowners own the private sewer line from the house to the Village's main sewer line. As such, they are responsible for maintenance and repair of the lateral sewer.

Question: Who will pay for water related damage to my property?

Answer: All water-related damages to the basement as a result of a broken private line on private property or on the Village right-of-way are the responsibility of the property owner. The property owner is also responsible for regulating their water usage to minimize damage.

FAQ: Sewer Backups

Question: Will my insurance cover any damage to my home or property?

Answer: In the majority of cases, a special rider is needed on your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy to cover damages related to sewer backups or water damage. Check with your insurance agent for policy provisions.

Question: What does Public Works do to prevent sewer backups?

Answer: Public Works makes every attempt to prevent sewer backups in the public wastewater system before they occur. Sewer lines are designed to prevent accumulation and blockages. Maintenance crews inspect and clean miles of wastewater lines throughout the Village on a regular schedule. De-greasing chemicals are sometimes injected into lines in areas that are prone to stoppages, such as those near restaurants, apartments or high-density housing developments.

Question: What causes sewer odors and how can they be prevented?

Answer: Sewer odor or gas is always present in the sewer system and cannot be eliminated. This is why there are provisions in the uniform plumbing code to ensure that vent pipes and traps are installed in buildings and the home plumbing systems to carry odor out through the roof vent or to prevent it from coming back in to the house. The most common causes of sewer gas odor entering the house are as follows:

1. Caps on the floor traps and cleanouts are not properly installed.
2. Washing machines drain to vent pipes without traps.
3. Cleanout plugs are removed from the inside of floor drains.
4. Seldom-used flood drains do not have water in the traps.

Visually check and correct these conditions and pour water into unused drains. If odor problems continue, have your plumber completely check the sewer system to make sure there are no air leaks. If the plumber has checked the complete sewer system and no air leaks are found, call Public Works at 708-206-3470 for further assistance and investigation.

Atmospheric conditions can also have an effect on when you get odor inside the house. When Barometric pressure is low or falling, the air outside is heavier than air in the sewer system. Any openings in the sewer system will discharge sewer gas or odors.

FAQ: Sewer Backups

Question: What is safe to flush down the drain?

Answer: the only items you should ever flush down a toilet is human waste and toilet paper. NEVER use a toilet as a trash can. Flushing the wrong items can damage the sewer system, cause sewer backups in your home, and cause sewer overflows which damage the environment.

Do NOT flush the following items:

- Automotive fluids
- Bandages and bandage wrappings
- Chewing gum
- Cigarette butts
- Cleaning wipes of any kind
- Condoms
- Cotton balls and swabs
- Dental floss
- Disposable diapers
- Facial tissue
- Grease
- Paint / Solvents / Sealants / Thinners
- Poisons & Hazardous waste
- Sanitary napkins / tampons
- Unused medications

Questions?



Please contact Public Works by calling:

708-206-3470

E-mail: publicworks@homewoodil.gov

Website: www.homewoodil.gov

Village of Homewood
Department of Public Works
17755 Ashland Avenue
Homewood, IL 60430