

SANITARY SEWER FLOODING

INFORMATION FOR HOMEOWNERS AND RESIDENTS

(Facts about sewer backup incidents)

A sewer backup creates a stressful and emotional situation and can become a health and safety issue for homeowners or renters. Although the City of Sidney makes every effort to prevent such incidents, they may still occur. The following information is offered to help property owners and residents understand why sewer backups happen, how they can be prevented, and what steps citizens should take if a sewer backup affects their property.

What causes a sewer backup?

Sanitary sewer overflows can be caused by numerous factors including sewer pipe blockages and excessive clean water infiltration and inflow into the sewer system.

Sewer pipe blockages in either main sewer lines or service laterals (lines between building and the main line) are generally attributed to pipe breaks, tree root intrusion, and items flushed in the line that the sewer is not meant to handle, such as toys, underwear, towels, diapers, paper products (other than toilet paper), keys, and other items. What you flush down your toilet or drain may not affect you, but it might cause problems for your neighbors!

Water infiltration comes from both the City sewer mains as well as private property.

Water infiltration into the City sewer mains is attributed to cracks in the sewers, old lines that have separated joints and deteriorated manholes. Water infiltration from private property usually comes from broken sewer (pipe) laterals.

Water inflow is storm water that is directed to the sanitary sewers through flooding in the streets or connections such as roof downspouts, driveway drains and groundwater sump pumps (foundation drains). When the inflow enters the sanitary sewer it takes up space that is required for the wastewater and can cause an overloaded sewer system to back up during significant rain events. Inflow enters on the ground surface or in the storm sewers and must be diverted from the sanitary sewer whenever possible. This problem depends upon the overall rainfall and the severity of particular rain events.

All of these sources contribute an enormous amount of water into the sanitary sewer and results in a reduction of the sewer capacity. Since 1997, the City of Sidney has been aggressively investigating and correcting these sources of clean water intrusion. Over the past several years, the City has been replacing old deteriorated sanitary sewers, sealing sewer mains and making repairs. The Inflow & Infiltration Program is an ongoing annual maintenance program that the City funds as it will take many years to complete. You can help by checking your own plumbing to determine if you have clean water connections such as foundation drains and downspout connections.

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

First, take action to protect people and valuable property:

- | Call the Utilities Department immediately at the 24 hr phone number 498-8127. We are available 24 hrs a day, 7 days to assist you.
- | A quick check with nearby neighbors will help determine if the backup appears to be in your neighbor's wastewater line and/or widespread in your neighborhood.
- | Keeping in mind that ceramic plumbing fixtures such as toilets are fragile, quickly close all drain openings with stoppers or plugs. Tub, sink, and floor drains may need additional weight to keep them sealed. A string mop can be used to help plug toilet openings.

- | Don't run any water down your drains until the blockage has been cleared.
- | Once notified, City personnel will investigate the sewer backup and take immediate corrective action if the problem is with the main sewer. You will be advised if the problem is in your service lateral.
- | Call a plumber if the problem is in your lateral service line.

What will the City do about a sewer backup on my property?

- | You will be asked questions about the backup timing, location, the property at risk, etc.
- | City personnel will check for blockages in the main sewer. If found, the blockage will be cleared as quickly as possible. This is a free service to you and may save you costly, unnecessary plumbing and repair bills.
- | If the main sewer is not blocked, you will be advised to call a plumbing or sewer contractor to check your service lateral. Maintenance and repair of the service lateral is the owner's responsibility.
- | If the sewer is flooded due to infiltration, the property owner will be advised to take the necessary action to relocate property away from basement drains.
- | To minimize damage and possible negative health effects, you should arrange for cleanup of the property as soon as possible.

Claims Process for Sewer Backup

- | The City is held to a maintenance standard regarding the sanitary sewer system and City personnel take your sewer backup/flooding problem seriously and will make every effort to assist you in mitigating the problem. It is not necessary to be upset with the employees for the incident since they are the individuals who are doing everything that they can to address the problem.
- | City personnel are not authorized agents for the City of Sidney for claims settlement purposes. City staff are present to repair the sewer and cannot address your concerns about damage or the claims process.
- | The City of Sidney is insured through the Miami Valley Risk Management Association (MVRMA). If you want information about the claims process, please call the City's Finance Department at 498-8146 and they will direct you to the appropriate MVRMA representative.
- | To determine liability for damages, a full investigation will be conducted by the MVRMA Claims Administrator as to the cause of the event that caused the damage.

Will insurance cover any damage to my home or property?

In the majority of cases, a special rider will need to be added to your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy to cover damages related to sewage backups or water damage. This optional coverage is usually not very expensive, but you must usually request that it be added to your policy. The City is held to a duty to resolve the back up problem when notified and is seldom liable for any damages. If you are concerned about the possibility of sewer backup and want to insure that you are covered, the City urges you to check with you home insurer regarding the availability of sewer backup insurance.

Should I install a backwater prevention valve?

A backwater valve can prevent or greatly reduce the possibility of sewer backup. A backwater valve is a fixture installed into a sewer line, and sometimes in a drain line, in the basement of your building to prevent sewer backflows. A properly installed and maintained backwater valve works on a one-way system, sewage can go out but cannot come back in. The City of Sidney offers assistance for the installation of a backwater valve to property owners that experience continual sewer backups. For more information about the City's Flood Abatement Program click on the following link: [Flood Abatement Program](#)

Remember:

- | Contact your insurance company and see if you are insured against sewer backups.
- | If you are not insured, consider purchasing additional coverage because the City is usually not responsible for damages caused by a blocked line or flooding as a result of infiltration or inflow into the sanitary system.
- | Call the City at 498-8127 if you suspect there is a sewer backup.