

## **Sewer Line Backup QA & Customer Information**

### **Contact Information:**

**Weekday (8:00 AM – 4:00 PM) (636) 327-5102**

**After Hours: (636) 357-9956**

The following information is offered to help property owners and residents understand how sewer backups can be prevented, and what steps should be taken if a sewer backup affects their property.

All information, recommendations & suggestions are meant to assist in the event of a sewer backup, and are not a commitment to reimburse the homeowner for costs incurred. The homeowner has a duty to protect their property regardless of the cause of the backup. Refusal to do so may result in negative health effects and property damage.

The following questions and answers may be helpful:

### **What should I do if sewage backs up into my home?**

First, report it to the City of Wentzville using the contact information listed at the top of this page.

Second, take action to protect people and valuable property:

1. Take caution when entering a basement with water on the floor or in the carpet. Wear rubber boots to unplug floor lamps, space heaters etc. to avoid electrical shock and avoid contact with pollutants.
2. Do not run water down in upstairs drains until the blockage has been cleared.
3. Take reasonable steps to clean or arrange for cleanup to include removing all wet or sewage contaminated items. Disinfect and use fans to dry the affected area as soon as possible to minimize damage.
4. There are qualified businesses that specialize in this type of cleanup if you do not feel safe or confident in your abilities.
5. If the backup is high enough to affect any electrical devices, furnaces, equipment or appliances, contact a reputable repair service to inspect for damages.

Third, if the public sewer main line is clear, you will be advised to call a plumbing company or sewer contractor to check your private service line. Maintenance and repair of the service line is the owner's responsibility from the house to and including the connection to the City's public sewer main line. The City is not authorized to perform private service line work.

Fourth, contact your Insurance Provider promptly to report damage from the incident and for future instructions. Some insurance companies provide or require professional services for the clean-up.

### **If I call the city, what will they do about a sewer backup onto my property?**

City emergency crews are on call 24 hours, 7 days a week to assist you in an emergency such as a sewer line backup and will follow up and investigate the backup to determine the cause of the incident and identify any corrective action.

1. You will be asked questions concerning the backup to include contact, timing, location, and property information and kept informed during and after the process by the City's crew leader or a supervisor.

2. City personnel will respond and check for blockage in the public sewer main line at or near the backed up location. If located, steps will be taken to clear the blockage as soon as possible.
3. If the public sewer main line is not blocked, you will be advised to call a plumbing company or sewer contractor to check your private service line. Maintenance and repair of the service line is the owner's responsibility from the house to and including the connection to the City's public sewer main line. The City crew is not authorized to perform any private service line work.
4. An incident report with your information and statement will be generated by the City's crew leader and will be followed up by the department supervisor and/or delegated representatives by the City of Wentzville.

### **What if the Blockage is in my service line?**

1. Call a plumbing company or sewer contractor to check your service line. Maintenance and repair of the service line is the owner's responsibility.
2. Contact your Insurance Provider promptly to report the incident and for future instructions.

### **How could a sewer backup affect me?**

If the backup occurs in a City maintained line, sewage may overflow out of the lowest home opening. In some homes - especially those with basements, or where the lowest level is even with the sewer lines - the overflowing wastewater may exit through the floor drain.

### **What causes a sewer backup?**

Sanitary sewer backups can be caused by a number of factors. They usually involve sewer pipe blockages in either the City's public sewer main lines or in the private sewer service line which the property owner owns and maintains (sewer line between buildings and the City's public sewer main line). Causes of a backup may include pipe breaks or cracks due to tree roots, system deterioration, or improper construction. In home and office plumbing systems, a frequent cause is accumulation of grease, tree roots, hair, or other solid materials, such as disposable diapers, baby wipes, sanitary napkins or paper towels that are difficult for wastewater pipes to handle. Such instances may cause major backups in the City's public sewer main lines as well as in residents' private service lines. Another frequent cause of blockages within the City's system is intentional dumping of debris into sewer cleanouts and manholes. Leaves, sticks, rocks, bricks and trash are sometimes found in manholes.

### **Is there anything I can do to help prevent sewage backup into my home?**

Avoid putting grease or potato peelings down your garbage disposal or household drain and don't flush disposable diapers, baby wipes, sanitary napkins or paper towels down the toilet. Grease will solidify, collect debris and accumulate in the City's public sewer main lines and your own private sewer service line. The accumulation of grease, disposable diapers, baby wipes, sanitary napkins, paper towels and debris like dirt and rocks can stop up your drains and cause blockage in your own private sewer service line and the City's public sewer main lines.