

How a Sewer System Works

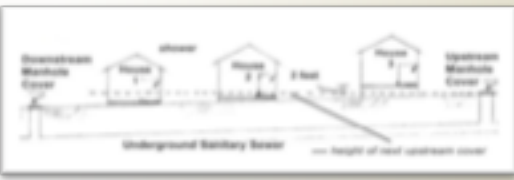
A property owner's sewer pipes are called **service laterals** and are connected to larger local main and regional trunk lines. Service laterals run from the connection at the home to the connection with the public sewer. These laterals are the responsibility of the property owner and must be maintained by the property owner.



Is my home required to have a backflow prevention device?

Section 710.1 of the Uniform Plumbing Code (U.P.C.) states: "Drainage piping serving fixtures which have flood level rims located below the elevation of the next upstream manhole cover or private sewer serving such drainage piping **shall** be protected from backflow of sewage by installing an approved type of backwater valve." The intent of Section 710.1 is to protect the building interior from mainline sewer overflows or surcharges.

Additionally, U.P.C. 710.6 states: "Backwater valves **shall** be located where they will be accessible for inspection and repair at all times and, unless continuously exposed, shall be enclosed in a masonry pit fitted with an adequately sized removable cover."



If you have a sewage spill from your private sewer line that impacts storm drains, waterways or public property, contact:

City of Redwood City
(650) 780-7464

San Mateo County Environmental Health
(650) 372-6200

California Health and Safety Code, Sections 5410-5416 requires:

- No person shall discharge raw or treated sewage or other waste in a manner that results in contamination, pollution, or a nuisance.
- Any person who causes or permits a sewage discharge to any state waters:
 - Must immediately notify the local health agency of the discharge.
 - Shall reimburse the local health agency for services that protect the public's health and safety.
 - Who fails to provide the required notice to the local health agency is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine (between \$500-\$1,000) and/or imprisonment for less than one year.

San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board

(510) 622-2300
Requires the prevention, mitigation, response to, and reporting of sewage spills.

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)

800.852.7550
California Water Code, Article 4, Chapter 4, Sections 13268-13271 & California Code of Regulations, Title 23, Division 3, Chapter 9.2, Article 2, Sections 2250-2260 require:

- Any person who causes or permits sewage in excess of 1,000 gallons to be discharged to state waters shall immediately notify the Office of Emergency Services.
- Any person who fails to provide the notice required by this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine (less than \$20,000) and/or imprisonment for not more than one year.

Sewer Spill Reference Guide

Your Responsibilities as a Private Property Owner

Provided to you by:

City of Redwood City
Public Works Department

1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 780-7464

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How do sewage spills happen?

Sewage spills occur when the wastewater in underground pipes overflows through a manhole, cleanout, or broken pipe. Most spills are relatively small and can be stopped and cleaned up quickly, but left unattended they can cause health hazards, damage to homes and businesses, and threaten the environment, local waterways, and beaches.

CAUTION!

When trying to locate a sewer problem, never open manholes or other public sewer structures. Only our crews are allowed to open & inspect these structures.

Common causes of sewage spills

- Grease build-up
- Tree roots
- Broken/cracked pipes
- Missing or broken cleanout caps
- Undersized sewers
- Groundwater/rainwater entering the sewer system through pipe defects and illegal connections

Prevent most sewage backups with a Backflow Prevention Device

This type of device can help prevent sewage backups into homes and businesses. If you don't already have a Backflow Prevention Device, contact a professional plumber or contractor to install one as soon as possible.

Protect the environment!

If you let sewage from your property discharge to a gutter or storm drain, you may be subject to penalties and/or out-of-pocket costs for clean-up and enforcement efforts. A property owner may be charged for costs incurred by agencies responding to spills from private properties.

What to look for:

Sewage spills can be a very noticeable gushing of water from a manhole or a slow water leak that may take time to be noticed. Don't dismiss unaccounted-for wet areas. Look for:

- Drain backups inside the building.
- Wet ground and/or water leaking around manhole lids onto your street.
- Leaking water from cleanouts or outside drains
- Unusual odorous wet areas: sidewalks, external walls, ground/landscape around a building.

The following are indicators of a possible obstruction in your sewer line:

- Water comes up in floor drains, showers or toilets.
- Toilets, showers or floor drains below ground level drain very slowly.

What to do if there is a spill:

Immediately notify the City of Redwood City. Our crews locate the blockage and determine if it is in the public sewer; if it is the crew removes the blockage and arranges for cleanup.

If the backup is in your private internal plumbing or in the private service laterals, **you are required to immediately:**

- Control and minimize the spill by shutting off or not using the water
- Keep sewage out of the storm drain system using sandbags, dirt and/or plastic sheeting
- Call a plumbing professional to clear blockages and make repairs as needed. Look in the yellow pages under "Plumbing Drain & Sewer Cleaning" or "Sewer Contractors."
- Always notify your sewer/public works department or public sewer district of sewage spills.

Spill cleanup inside the home:

For large clean ups, a professional cleaning firm should be contacted to clean up impacted areas. You can locate local firms by looking in the Yellow Pages under "Water Damage" or "Fire Damage." If you hire a contractor, it is recommended to get estimates from more than one company. Sometimes, homeowner's insurance will pay for the necessary cleaning due to sewer backups. Not all policies have this coverage, so check with your agent.

If you decide to clean up a small spill inside your home, protect yourself from contamination by observing the following safety measures. Those persons whose resistance to infection is compromised should not attempt this type of clean up.

Other Tips:

- Keep children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed.
- Turn off heating/air conditioning systems
- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of the affected area.
- Discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected (such as: mattresses, rugs, cosmetics, baby toys, etc.)
- Remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or flood waters.

- Thoroughly clean all hard surfaces (such as flooring, concrete, molding, wood and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, sinks and other plumbing fixtures) with hot water and laundry or dish detergent.
- Help the drying process with fans, air conditioning units, and dehumidifiers.
- After completing cleanup, wash your hands with soap and water. Use water that has been boiled for 1 minute (allow the water to cool before washing your hands) OR use water that has been disinfected (solution of 1/8 teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 min. If water is cloudy, use ¼ teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Wash clothes worn during cleanup in hot water and detergent (wash apart from uncontaminated clothes).
- Wash clothes contaminated with sewage in hot water and detergent. Consider using a Laundromat until your onsite wastewater system has been professionally inspected and serviced.
- Seek immediate attention if you become injured or ill.

Spill cleanup outside the home:

- Keep children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed.
- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of affected area.
- Clean up sewage solids (fecal material) and place in properly functioning toilet or double bag and place in garbage container.
- On hard surfaces areas such as asphalt or concrete, it is safe to use a 2% bleach solutions, or ½ cup of bleach to 5 gallons of water, but don't allow it to reach a storm drain as the bleach can harm the environment.
- After cleanup, wash hands with soap and water. Use water that has been boiled for 1 minute (allow to cool before washing your hands) OR use water that has been disinfected (solution of 1/8 teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water). Let it stand for 30 min. If water is cloudy, use ¼ teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Wash clothes worn during cleanup in hot water and detergent (wash apart from uncontaminated clothes).
- Wash clothes contaminated with sewage in hot water and detergent. Consider using a Laundromat until your onsite wastewater system has been professionally inspected and serviced.
- Seek immediate attention if you become injured/ill.