

# WAYS TO PREVENT BACKUPS IN YOUR LATERAL AND THE MAIN LINE SEWER

The property owner can do many things to prevent the sewer lateral from backing up. Remember too, that the very same things can help to prevent backup's in the sewer main as well. If everyone would be careful about how they dispose of certain products, our systems would be a great deal more efficient, cause fewer backups, cost us all less money, and prevent a lot of misery.

**Grease:** Cooking oil should be poured into a heat-resistant container and disposed of, after it cools off, in the garbage, not the drain. Some people assume that washing grease down the drain with hot water is satisfactory. This grease goes down the drain, cools off, and solidifies either in the drain, the property owners sewer lateral, or in the main sewer. When this happens, the line constricts, and eventually clogs.

**Paper Products:** Paper towels, disposable and cloth diapers and feminine products cause a great deal of problems in the property owner's lateral as well as in the sewer main. These products do not deteriorate quickly, as does toilet paper and bathroom tissue. They become lodged in portions of the lateral/main, causing a sewer backup. These products should also be disposed of in the garbage.

**Roots:** Shrubs and trees, seeking moisture, will make their way into open sewer joints and sewer line cracks. These roots can cause extensive damage. They may start out small, getting into a small joint opening or crack in the pipe; but as the tree or shrub continues to grow, so does the root. After time, this causes your sewer line to break, which in turn allows debris to hang up in the line, thus causing a back up.

One way to prevent roots from entering your line is to replace your line and tap with new plastic pipe. The other alternative is to be careful about planting trees and greenery around your sewer line.

If you have continuing problems with tree roots in your lateral, you may have to have them cut periodically. If you have a plumber clean roots out of your sewer lateral, please call us so that we can also clean the sewer main.

**Sewer Odor:** Another concern that property owners have is that they can smell sewer odors inside their home or building. There are many ways to prevent this from occurring.

Under each drain in your plumbing system, there should be a "P-trap". If there is water in this fitting, odor or gases from the sewer cannot enter through the drain from either the property owner's lateral or the sewer main.

Periodically, pour water into unused floor drains, sinks, etc that are not regularly used.

Another way to prevent sewer odor is to ensure that the vents, which are located on your roof, are free from bird nests, leaves, etc. When these vents are clear, the sewer odors will escape through these vents.

**Illegal Plumbing Connections:** DO NOT connect French drains, sump pumps and other flood control systems to your sanitary sewer.

French drains use underground perforated drain pipes or rock filled wells to distribute storm or groundwater water over a wide area that then infiltrates into the ground. It is illegal, and the clean water that these items contribute will overwhelm your lateral and could cause a sewer back-up. Consult a plumber to correct any illegal connections.

**Needles:** Unfortunately, some people dispose of hypodermic needles in the sewer system. The presence of these needles in the wastewater collection system presents special and possible deadly problems for wastewater collection and wastewater treatment employees. PLEASE DO NOT FLUSH NEEDLES.

The proper method of disposal is to re-cap the needle and put it into a "sharps container". (This could be any rigid plastic container such as a bleach bottle...no milk bottles please.) When it is full, tape the container securely, and call your local pharmacy for advice on proper disposal methods.

**PLEASE DO NOT FLUSH THEM OR THROW THEM INTO THE GARBAGE!**

**Hazardous Material:** Never dispose of any flammable or hazardous material down the drain or toilet. Discharge of these materials is not only damaging, but may be dangerous and illegal.