

## **WAYS TO PREVENT BACKUPS IN YOUR BUILDING SEWER, LATERAL AND THE MAIN LINE SEWER:**

The property owner can do many things to prevent the sewers from backing up. If everyone would be careful about how they dispose of certain products, our systems would be a great deal more efficient, experience far 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' line, 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. 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 sewer line cracks. These roots can cause extensive damage. They may start out small, getting into a small 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 backup. Old clay or iron pipe may be more susceptible to root penetration but it could happen to new plastic pipe. The other alternative is to avoid planting around your building sewer. If you have continuing problems with tree roots in your building sewer, you may have to have them cut periodically. If you have a plumber cut out roots in your building sewer, please call us, so that we can 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 is 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, check to make

sure that unused drains, sinks, etc. have water in the "P-trap". 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, rain gutters, and other flood control systems to your sanitary sewer. It is illegal, and debris and silt will clog your line. That extra storm water in a sewer pipe could cause the pipe to overflow and 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!**
- **Install a Backflow Prevention Valve:** A backflow valve can prevent or greatly reduce the possibility of a sewer backup. A backflow valve is a fixture installed into a sewer line, and sometimes into a drain line, in the basement of your building to prevent sewer backflows. A properly installed and maintained backflow valve works on a one-way system, sewage can go out, but cannot come back in. Property owners are responsible for the installation and maintenance of backflow valves. The cost to install one is dependent upon the type of plumbing in your home and the difficulty of installation. A qualified plumber can assist you in determining your needs.
- If you use your basement for storage, use plastic containers to keep your possessions dry. Place items off the floor on blocks. Plastic garbage bags crack, then leak and aren't good for storage. Imagine that your basement flooded today – how much would you lose? Insurance cannot replace the family pictures and the baby shoes. Protect them and store them in a safe place now.

- We sincerely wish that sewer lines (main, lateral or a building sewer) never need to be dug up. However, that possibility exists. Therefore, it is in the homeowner's best interest not to build over any sewer. If there is a sewer right-of-way going through your property, and you place a shed, garage, patio, driveway, etc. over top of it, you are gambling. There is always a chance that the sewer may have to be dug up and you lose the bet.