

Sewer Backups

A sewer backup occurs when a sewer line becomes blocked. A blockage can occur on your property, or on City property, causing a backup through floor drains and toilets on the lower level of a home or other structure. Sewage contains bacteria and other hazards, and should not be touched.

Prevent Backups

DO:

- Periodically add a root-growth preventative to your drains.
- Install and maintain a backflow valve on the lowest drain on your property.
- Hire a licensed plumber to inspect your sewer lateral for obstructions or breaks.

DO NOT:

- Plant trees near sewer lines.
- Connect drains or sump pumps to the sewer system.
- Dispose of fats, oils and grease (FOG) in sinks and toilets.
- Flush rags, paper towels or other sanitary items down your toilet.



If a Backup Occurs

Report sewer backups immediately by calling 311. A wastewater utility crew will be sent to your property.

DO NOT walk through standing water if there is the slightest chance that it is in contact with the electrical current serving your property (i.e. outlets or connected appliances that are submerged).

Before the crew arrives, the property owner should do the following:

- Stop use of all water.
- Cut off all electrical power to the flooded area, if it is safe to do so.
- Locate your exterior cleanout to point out to the crew.
- Make sure floor drains are not blocked.
- If possible, remove furniture or other items from the flooded area.

When City crews arrive they will:

- Access your outside cleanout to remove possible blockages to the service connection or sewer main.
- Check area sanitary sewer manholes for visible signs of blockages.
- If the cause of the backup is on the City side of the property line, they will make repairs or clear the blockage.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is only responsible for clearing a blockage on the City side of the service. You are responsible for backups on your side of the property line. If this happens, you will need to make repairs. Only hire reputable licensed plumbers to make repairs.

Your Cleanout

Your cleanout is a capped pipe connected to your property's sewer line. It is usually located near the property line. Always keep your cleanout visible and accessible.

Make sure the cap is secure and in good condition.



Without an outside cleanout, DPW cannot attempt to remove a blockage from the service line.

Crews cannot and will not enter your property to clear a blockage.

Property owners are responsible for installing a cleanout. A reputable, licensed plumber can install a cleanout. They are required to file a permit with the Department of Housing to install a cleanout.

Protect Yourself

- Add a sewer backup rider for your homeowner's insurance policy.
- Purchase sewer lateral coverage.
- Take photos and save all receipts related to damage, repairs and cleaning.

Cleaning Up

Clean up should begin as soon as the overflow is stopped and the area is safe.

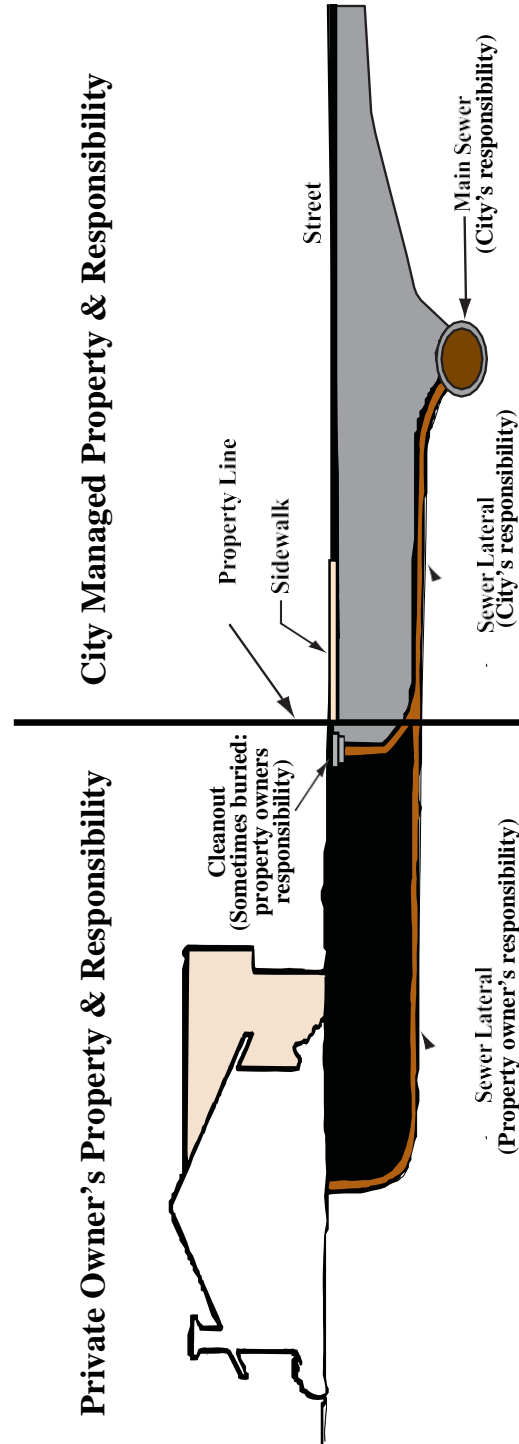
- Avoid direct contact with overflow water – protect hands and skin with gloves, rubber boots, long sleeves, long pants and goggles.
- Remove standing water and dispose of it in the toilet or sink. DO NOT dump it outside.
- Dispose of large soaked items by calling Baltimore City Bulk Trash service (311) or by taking them to one of the City's Drop Off Centers.
- Disinfect floor and wall surfaces.
- Air-dry flooded areas.

Although DPW is not responsible for any cleaning or debris removal, we will remove as much sewer water as possible with pumps. We will not move or remove any items from a building.

Legal

Baltimore City is not liable for unforeseen events, including flood damage or sewer backups. For legal clarification on matters related to a sewer backup or flooding, or to file a claim, please contact the Baltimore City Law Department at 410-396-3400. The Law Department will investigate claims for merit, but filing a claim is NOT a guarantee of reimbursement.

For more information visit
www.baltimorecity.gov



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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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