

## DOCUMENT YOUR CLEANUP EFFORTS

Document all costs related to the sewage backup. DPW has a Sewage Backup Expedited Reimbursement Program for qualified applicants to receive funds to cover the cost of cleanup and disinfection. To request reimbursement, an applicant must follow the appropriate process required by the City. Document and take pictures of all property damage and the affected area. Documentation is vital to file claims with either the City or your insurance company.

## LEGAL

Baltimore City is not liable for unforeseen events, including flood damage or sewage backups. For legal clarification on matters related to a sewage 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.

## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's External Civil Rights Compliance Office (ECRCO) is responsible for enforcing several civil rights laws which, together, prohibit discrimination against the public on the basis of race, color, or national origin (including on the basis of limited English proficiency), sex, disability and age by applicants for and recipients of federal financial assistance from EPA. The Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) is a recipient of federal financial assistance. As such, any aid, benefit or service that DPW provides must be administered in a nondiscriminatory manner.

DPW takes all allegations of discrimination seriously. If you feel that you have been discriminated against you may file a complaint of discrimination. Allegations of discrimination based on the components listed above will be investigated by the DPW Office of Equity and Environmental Justice. Complaints must be filed with the Department within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act.

Please direct all inquiries to:

Baltimore City Department of Public Works  
Office of Equity and Environmental Justice  
**ATTN: Equity Coordinator**  
200 Holliday Street, Baltimore MD 21202

You may also direct inquiries to 410-396-3310.



BALTIMORE CITY  
Department of Public Works

# HANDLING SEWAGE BACKUPS

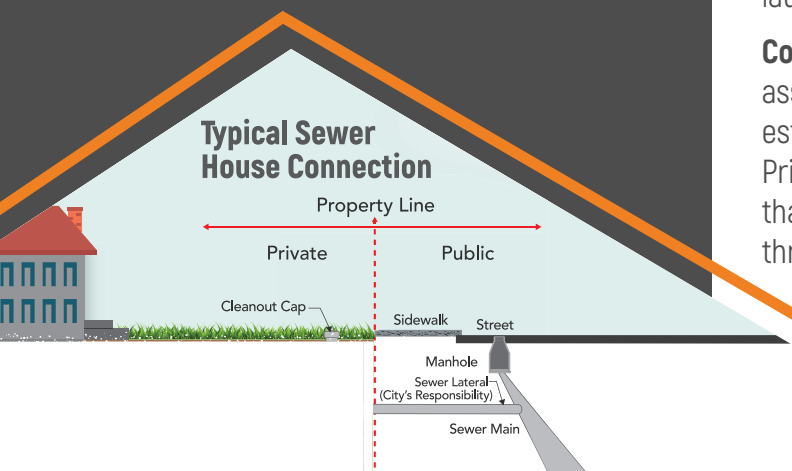
PUBLICWORKS.BALTIMORECITY.GOV  
Call 311 to Report Backups

The Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) prepared this brochure to provide customers with step-by-step information on what to do in the event of a sewage backup at their property. This document will guide you through the process – from documentation of the event to the solicitation of a professional to perform the actual cleanup.

## TIPS TO AVOID CAUSING BACKUPS

Customers can unwittingly cause backups by placing things in their sinks, toilets, bathtubs, or other drains that clog the sewer system. Additionally, the connection of unapproved devices can have unintended consequences. Follow these tips to reduce additional damage to your system:

- **Do not flush wipes.** Many wipes labeled as “flushable” do not dissolve properly in the sewer system. Instead, these wipes accumulate inside pipes and pump systems, causing back-ups and overflows.
- **Do not connect sump pumps, gutters, roof drainage, and similar drainage systems to the sanitary sewer system without a permit from DPW.** These connections can overwhelm your sewer system during wet weather events.



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A SEWAGE BACKUP

**Prevent Electrocutation:** IMMEDIATELY turn off the power if there is standing water or electrical wires near the backup. This is critical as the wires may come into contact with water or soggy materials creating an imminent danger.

**Distance Yourself:** Keep all children and pets away from the sewage.

**Identify Cleanout/Lateral:** Confirm the presence of the cleanout or lateral on your property. See graphic below as a guide.

**Notify DPW:** Call “311” or go to the 311 website [www.baltimorecity.gov/311-services](http://www.baltimorecity.gov/311-services).

**Protect Yourself:** Put on protective eyewear, gloves, and boots to avoid unprotected contact with sewage. Also cover all cuts, scrapes, and open wounds. Immediately wash hands and disinfect any wound that comes into contact with sewage.

## TAKE PRECAUTIONS

**Limit Exposure.** Stop using plumbing and appliances that drain into the sewer system, including sinks, showers, toilets, dishwashers and laundry machines.

**Contact A Professional:** Contact a plumber to assess the extent of the damage and provide an estimate to complete a comprehensive clean up. Prior to hiring a professional, it is recommended that property owners get estimates from at least three individuals or companies.

## SEWAGE CLEANUP

Contamination risks increase the longer sewage remains in contact with building interiors which can lead to other health risks to humans and pets. After the incident, you will need to hire/procure a cleanup professional to restore your property to safe conditions.

## WHO SHOULD DO THE CLEANUP?

You may wish to call your insurance provider to determine whether your policy covers sewage backup cleanup. The State of Maryland does not certify cleanup companies. However, the Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) provides education and standards for contractors who perform this work, and you may ask your contractor to follow these guidelines. The IICRC also lists cleanup companies organized by zip code and provides other useful information on its website: [www.iicrc.org](http://www.iicrc.org). You may also call the IICRC at (844) 464-4272. Note: This number is not toll-free.

If the work is not covered by insurance, you may decide to hire a private contractor. Prior to doing so, you may wish to call the Consumer Protection Division of the Maryland Attorney General's Office at (410) 576-6557 or go to their website [www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov). Ask if the contractor has a complaint history file.

**Be sure to keep copies of any receipts or invoices for your records.**