

Sewer Backups

How to Protect Your Home and Yourself

If you are served by a public sewer system there is a small possibility that you may experience a backup. If you do, there will be a nasty mess to clean up and part of your home and possessions may be damaged and contaminated. Backups can occur from uncontrollable circumstances. That is why you should protect your home and yourself.

Stopping the Backup

The installation of a backflow (backup) preventer will usually stop sewage from backing up into your home. A backflow preventer is required for new construction susceptible to backups. If your home doesn't have this fixture, a properly installed backflow preventer (about \$35.00 online or at home centers) blocks sewage from entering your basement. Remember, the backflow preventer must be cleaned periodically to operate correctly. An additional layer of protection is a water alarm. An inexpensive alarm costs as little \$10.00 at a home center or hardware. It will alert you to the problem and if you are experiencing a backup always call SCCMUA at 669-8311 days or 911. SCCMUA will check the main sewer and notify you about the results.

Paying for the Cleanup and Damages

The first step in protecting yourself from the financial burden that results from a sewer backup is to check your insurance policy for backup coverage. This is not the same as flood insurance. If you don't have coverage, you should see your agent about coverage. When you check your policy, be sure and check the level of coverage. Be sure the coverage is equivalent to the value of the structure and personal property that may be damaged. There are very limited circumstances where the sewer system may be responsible for these costs.

More Information

You can find more information on the SCCMUA website- sccmua.com
There is also a link to SCCMUA on the City's website.

Backflow Preventers and Water Alarms

Keeping your basement and home clean & safe from sewage

Backflow preventers prevent sewage from entering your house or basement when the sanitary sewer is backing up. They cost approximately \$36.00 plus tax at a plumbing supply store, are PVC, have a cleanout/inspection plate, and are installed into the plumbing that leaves your house (see attached picture).

A backup is caused by grease or some other material that is blocking the main sewer line that transports sewage from all the houses connected to it onto the treatment facility. When this happens sewage backs up in the main line and will cause your drains and toilets to not take away the waste. When the main is full, the sewage that is backed up will flow into the lowest point, either the basement plumbing or out of the top of a sanitary manhole onto the ground. The back flow preventer has a one way flapper valve; as the sewage tries to enter your house, it slams shut, not allowing your home to become flooded. Periodic cleaning of the backflow preventer's flapper valve ensures it seals tightly to stop sewage from entering your home.

If a backup is occurring and the backflow preventer is closed, you may still flood your home by running water from any source (toilet, sink, shower, washer, etc.) within the house. The water cannot get out so it will back up into the sinks, toilets, or will spill out of a basement floor drain. A water alarm near the basement floor drain will alert you to water or sewage (if the back flow preventer is not sealed properly) being spilled out of this drain. This will allow you to minimize any damage and get in touch with SCCMUA (669-8311 or 911) at anytime. If the mainline sewer is plugged, they will correct the problem. If the problem is within your lead, they will let you know that. A water alarm can be purchased at a home improvement store for as little as \$10.00.

More information can be found on the SCCMUA website: sccmua.com or on the City's web site where there is also a link to SCCMUA's site.