
Subject: SANITARY SEWER BACKUPS**No. 60.1****Date: September 29, 2008****page: 1 of: 2**

PURPOSE:

The Policy establishes guidelines for responding to sewer backups and establishes criteria for compensating customers who suffer damages due to situations beyond their control.

SCOPE:

The Policy authorizes the City Attorney to pay reasonable claims for sewer backup damages when the cause for backup could not be controlled by the property owner.

POLICY:

Sanitary sewers are a convenience in disposing of waste water. It is normal to expect the sewer to be available whenever needed to carry dirty water away from laundry, kitchen and bathroom facilities. Unfortunately there are unusual circumstances that can cause a sewer backup, when the water does not drain away as expected. Many people call the City for assistance when their sewer works very slowly or completely stops working. As a matter of information, we have written down some of the most frequently asked questions and responses as follows:

When there is a sewer backup at someone's house, will the City send someone out to clean the sewer?

City sewer service is available at any hour by calling 385-81 49 or 385-81 57. Someone will come to check the main sewer in the street. If the main sewer is stopped, it will be cleaned immediately as a city responsibility. If the main sewer is working properly, the person calling will be advised that the problem is in the sewer that leads from the house to the main sewer. It is a property owner's responsibility to clean the sewer between the house and the street. City sewer service employees will not do this work.

What causes a sewer to backup?

Any solid material can fill a pipe and cause a stoppage. Most frequent causes are diapers, papers, rags and grease. Sometimes a tree root enters the pipe and causes a stoppage.

Who is responsible for damages when there is a sewer backup?

It depends on where the backup occurred and what caused it. For backup damage claims, the City will send out a claims person to investigate. Based on information given by the investigator and City sewer cleaning staff, the City Attorney is authorized to make a judgment as whether to pay or deny a claim.

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What factors are considered in deciding whether or not to pay a claim?

If a stoppage is in the sewer lead from the house to the main sewer and caused by a rag or grease, the material had to have come from the home. Therefore, the City will not pay this claim.

If a stoppage was in the main sewer and the water backed up in a nearby house, the City will reimburse the homeowner amount of the adjusted damage up to \$1,000.00, if the homeowner was not responsible for the cause of the stoppage.

What can be done to avoid tree root stoppages?

Tree root stoppages can be removed with a cutter that is attached to a flexible cable. Because a sewer provides moisture and plant nutrients, the root will grow back in time. The city is responsible to remove roots in the main sewer. In the lead between the house and the main sewer, the property owner will be responsible. On the average, roots should be removed once a year. In some instances, it is more cost effective to excavate and seal the pipe at the point where the root enters. When is documented that a tree root has entered the sewer lead within the public right-of-way, the City will be responsible to schedule a dig up and repair.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 5, 1987 (Trial)
 Continuance September 14, 1987.

SEE ALSO:

HISTORY: