

Sanitary Sewer Overflows

Facts about Sewer Basement Backups

The City of Hayward makes every effort to prevent such incidents, however they still may occur. The following information is offered to help property owners and residents understand why backups happen, how they can be prevented and what steps citizens should take if a sewer backup affects their property.

What causes a Sewer Backup?

Sanitary sewer overflows usually involve sewer pipe blockages in either main sewer lines or service laterals (sewer pipe between the main line and buildings). Causes may include pipe breaks or cracks due to tree roots, system deterioration, construction mishaps or insufficient system capacity due to population growth.

In home and office plumbing systems, the main cause of blockage is accumulation of grease, tree roots, hair or solid materials such as disposable diapers or sanitary napkins. These materials may cause major backups in the City's main lines as well as in resident's lateral lines.

Unfortunately vandalism can also play a part in sewer blockages. Leaves, sticks, rocks, bricks and trash have been found stuffed down manholes. If you witness any such activity, please report your observations to the City Police Dept.

How could a sewer backup affect me?

If a backup occurs in the City's main line, the wastewater will normally overflow out of the lowest possible opening, which is usually a manhole. However, in some homes with basements where the lowest level is even with the sewer lines, the overflowing wastewater may exit through the home's lower drains and toilets.

What should I do if sewage backs up into my home?

You should first take action to protect people and valuable property. Quickly close all drain openings with stoppers. Tub, sink and floor drains may need additional weight to keep them sealed. A string mop can be used to help plug toilet openings. Don't run any water down your drains until the blockage has been cleared.

Call the Public Works Dept immediately at 634-4612. If it is after business hours, call the Sheriff's Dept. at 634-5213.

What will the City do about a sewage back up at my property?

City personnel will check for blockages in the main line. If a blockage is found, it will be immediately cleared. If the main is not blocked, you will be advised to call a plumber or sewer contractor to check your lateral line. Maintenance and repair of the lateral is the owner's responsibility.

To minimize damage and negative health effects, you should arrange for cleanup of the property as soon as possible. There are qualified businesses that specialize in this type of cleanup.

If the sewer backup onto your property resulted from blockage in the main sewer line, City personnel will explain what the City can immediately do to help take care of the problem.