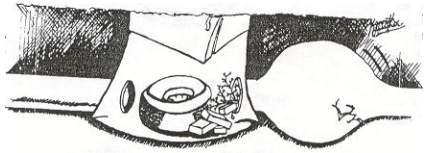


Preventing Sewage Backups



Important Answers To Your Questions from the Town of Vienna's Department of Public Works

• How could a sewage backup affect me?

An overflow in a wastewater line generally results from a stoppage in the line, which causes the wastewater to back up into nearby pipes and drains. Stoppages can occur not only in the main sewer lines outside your home, but also within your home or office plumbing system.

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

• What causes sewage backups?

In home and office plumbing systems, the main cause is accumulation of grease, hair, and other solid materials. Also, many items which are too large for wastewater pipes to handle (such as disposable diapers and sanitary napkins) are often flushed down toilets. All of these items can cause major backups in the Town's lines as well.

The greatest cause of wastewater stoppages within the Town's system is vandalism. Leaves, sticks, rocks, bricks, and trash have been found stuffed down manholes.

• What can I do to help?

Call the Department of Public Works immediately if you notice any cases of vandalism to sewer lines or manholes. This way, the debris can be removed before it causes a backup.

Avoid putting grease down your garbage disposal or any household drain. Not only could it accumulate in Town lines, it could also build up in your own system and might eventually require the services of a plumber.

Never put disposable diapers or sanitary napkins down the toilet *even if the labels indicate that you can do so*. These were not meant to be disposed of in this manner and besides stopping up lines, could damage your plumbing system.

• Is there anything I can do to reduce the possibility of sewage backing up into my home?

If the lowest level of your home or office is above ground level, the chances are slim that you will ever have a problem with overflows from the Town's wastewater lines. However, if the lowest level is below ground level, there is a slightly higher possibility that you may one day be affected by a backup.



Normally, if a stoppage occurs in your neighborhood's main wastewater line, only the lowest level drains and toilets will be affected. A common point is floor drains located in basement areas.

One way to prevent sewage from backing up through these sources is to install a plug in the floor drains. A plumber's test plug can be used to close the drain when not in use. For further information on these items and other preventative measures, contact a plumber or your local plumbing supply dealer.

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

Keeping in mind that ceramic plumbing fixtures such as toilets are fragile, quickly close all drain openings with stoppers or plugs. Tub, sink, and floor drains may need additional weight to keep them sealed. A string mop can be used to help plug toilets.

If you suspect the stoppage is in your home plumbing system, don't run any water down the drains until you or your plumber have cleared the cause.

If the backup appears to be in your neighborhood's main wastewater line, call the Department of Public Works immediately at the numbers listed on the other side.

A quick check with several nearby neighbors will help you determine if the blockage is widespread or if it is limited just to your home.

• What does the Town of Vienna do to prevent sewage backups?

The Town of Vienna makes every attempt to prevent backups in the public wastewater system before they occur. Sewer lines are specially designed to prevent accumulation and stoppages.

In addition, a maintenance crew is devoted to inspecting and cleaning wastewater lines throughout the Town. These lines are examined on a regular basis.

Degreasing chemicals are also injected into lines in areas that are prone to stoppages, such as those near restaurants, apartments or high density housing developments.

Even with the Town of Vienna's maintenance schedule, backups are often beyond the Town's control. Fortunately, they don't happen often. Very few are reported each year and most are confined to the sewage pipeline. Only on rare occasions has the wastewater actually backed up into a home.

• Will my insurance cover any damage resulting from sewage backups?

In the majority of cases, a special rider is needed to your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy to cover damages related to sewage backups or water damage. This optional coverage is generally inexpensive. However, you must usually request it, as it is not automatically included in most policies. Customers who may be vulnerable to backups, such as those with lower levels below the

ground, are especially advised to investigate this option.

Like the majority of municipalities around the country, the Town of Vienna cannot assume financial liability for damages resulting from sewage backups, since most stoppages are related to conditions that are beyond the Town's control. This is why it is important to verify that you are adequately insured!

• Who should I call to report a sewage backup?

Emergency crews from the Town of Vienna are on call 24 hours a day to assist you. In an emergency such as a wastewater line backup, contact the department at:

703-255-6381

Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm
or

Vienna Police 703-255-6366

After hours, weekends, and holidays

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