

SEWER BACKUP RESPONSE PROCEDURES

Office Response to a Citizen Report:

Proper response by municipal personnel when an individual home or business owner reports a sewer backup problem can greatly minimize anguish and loss from such incidents. A stressed caller should be treated with consideration and empathy. The call should be accepted or quickly referred and the following information gathered or provided:

- The location of the sewer backup and the person calling.
- The scope of immediate risks to people and property.
- Clear information about who from the municipality will respond and when.
- Suggestions for proper precautions that may minimize loss.

Field Response to a Sewer Backup Report:

Timely action taken by field personnel will vary, depending upon the situation. It is vital that the individual who reported the backup be met calmly, and that full respect is shown for the owner's property and possessions.

- Follow the Sewer Backup Emergency Response Plan as directed.
- Explain to the owner what the crew will be looking for during the inspection.
- Inspect the sewer backup area and take steps to protect people and property that may be at immediate risk.
- Take all necessary steps to determine the cause of the backup:
 - Check the flow in manholes above and below the backup location.
 - Televiser the lines to find and help document the problem.
- Quickly arrange to correct the problem if it is determined to be in the main lines:
 - If a blockage has caused the backup, remove the cause of the blockage and try to preserve it as evidence.
 - If possible, pump out the blocked area first, to avoid excess downstream surge.
 - If backup damage was significant, consider helping with initial cleanup, e.g., removal of water and sewer sludge.
 - Never discuss matters of legal claims or liability for damage. Explain that the municipality's insurance carrier will investigate and make final decisions regarding responsibility based on the facts.
- If the blockage problem was in the lateral line, clearly explain to the user what they must do to repair the problem.
- Provide the municipality's list of local plumbing/sewer line repair companies or suggest they use the yellow pages. Do not make recommendations.