

Sewage Backups and Blockages

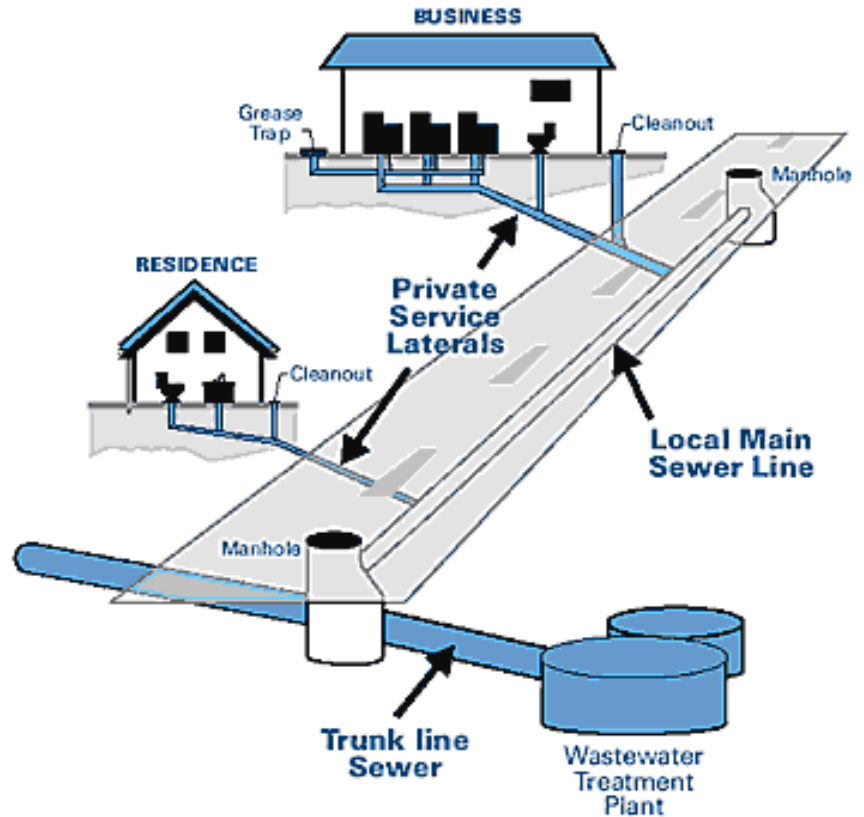
Township of Falls Authority

How a Sewer System Works

A typical sanitary sewer system is constructed of a network of pipes, laterals and mains connecting to each building and transporting sewage to a wastewater plant (see diagram to the right).

A property owner's sewer pipe is called a sewer lateral and connects to a larger authority-maintained pipe called a sewer main.

Sewer laterals are the responsibility of the property owner and must be maintained by the property owner for the entire distance from the house to the sewer main.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a sewer lateral?

A sewer lateral is the sewer pipe connecting the property to the main sewer pipe of the Authority. This main sewer pipe is typically located in the street and connects other sewer laterals. The sewage from each property flows to the Authority's sewer main and eventually to the wastewater treatment plant.

Who owns the sewer lateral?

The sewer laterals are the responsibility of the property owner and must be maintained by the property owner for the entire distance from the house to the sewer main. The Authority is not responsible for the sewer lateral.



How can I prevent a sewer backup?

DO NOT pour grease of any kind down sinks, garbage disposals, or other drains. Grease builds up inside the pipe and eventually blocks the sewer. Grease is the major contributor of a sewer blockage.

DO NOT flush diapers, sanitary napkins, newspapers, soiled rags, or paper towels down the toilet.

DO NOT put used oil, paint, solvents, or other chemicals down sewer lines.

DO NOT plant trees with shallow, spreading root systems near your sewer lateral. Tree roots seek water sources and will penetrate any cracks in the sewers. The roots can create a dense mat and trap materials.



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What should I do if I have a sewer backup?

Immediately stop using the sink, dishwasher, shower, toilet and washing machine. Call the Authority at 215-946-6062 and explain the situation to the person answering the telephone. If you are calling after hours, call 215-945-3100 and leave a detailed message including your name, address, the problem and a telephone number where you can be reached. Someone will return your telephone call within a short period of time. If you are a tenant, you should contact your landlord and inform him/her of the problem.

What will the Authority do if I have a sewer backup?

Authority personnel will check the sewer main to determine if there is a backup. If there is a backup in the Authority's sewer main, the Authority personnel will remove the obstruction. If there is no backup in the Authority's sewer main, the Authority personnel will inform you and you should then contact a registered or licensed plumber to remove the obstruction from your sewer lateral or your inside plumbing.

What if the obstruction is caused by tree roots?

If it is determined that the blockage in the Authority's sewer main was caused by tree roots, the Authority personnel will remove the tree roots from the sewer main only. The property owner is responsible for the removal of tree roots in the sewer lateral.

Is there a charge if I call the Authority about a sewer backup?

There is no charge by the Authority to check if there is a blockage located in the Authority's sewer main. The Authority will not remove any obstructions from your sewer lateral or inside plumbing. This is the responsibility of the property owner.

What steps can a property owner take as a safeguard in the event of a sewer backup?

The Authority strongly recommends to all property owners that have sewage service to their basements to install a check valve into the sewer line. A check valve will significantly reduce the chance of any property damage occurring in the event of a sewer backup.