

Sewer System Maintenance Program

The City's maintenance program is intended to avoid or minimize problems that can occur in the system and to keep it running efficiently as possible. The City is responsible for the sewer main lines and the business/home owner are responsible for their sewer service line, or side sewer. This runs from the main line connection to the residence/business.



Annual Maintenance:

Each year, the Public Works crews clean approximately one-quarter of the City's sewer lines. Cleaning begins in March, and is completed by the end of October. Some of the lines are cleaned more frequently to keep them functioning properly.

The sewer lines are cleaned with a cleaning nozzle that is propelled from one manhole to the next using water under high pressure (1,500 to 2,000 PSI). The nozzle is then pulled back to the starting manhole. As the nozzle is pulled back, water scours the inside of the sewer pipe. Any debris in the pipe is pulled back with the water.

The debris is removed from the manhole with a vacuum unit. If roots are found, they are cut with a root cutter. The City cleans and root cuts any problem areas one to two times per year. City sewer lines requiring a higher level of maintenance are cleaned annually or semi-annually.

The lift stations are checked three times weekly and include wireless monitoring and alarm equipment for flows, backups and power outages. This routine maintenance helps to prevent future blockages and back-ups and keeps our main sewer lines flowing consistently. Line cleaning does not damage your sewer system.

During line cleaning you may experience gurgling or bubbling water in the toilet bowl or, in rare cases, splash out of the bowl. The water that comes out is the water that is normally in the home's system (drain traps), *not* the water from the sanitary sewer lines in the street. **To minimize water splashing out of your toilet bowl, make it a habit to keep the lid down.** You may smell sewer gas from your basement floor drains and other fixtures. If this does occur, flush your toilet and pour water into your floor drains and sinks.

The common causes of air venting into homes during line cleaning are:

- Air movement from normal cleaning operations
- Use of higher pressure needed when cleaning sewer lines that have a steep slope
- Sewer lines running close to the building
- A plugged roof vent

What homeowners can do to help?

The sewer system begins with the plumbing fixtures inside your house. All of the drains from the sinks, tubs, showers and toilets are piped to the sewer service that exits your house and connects to the sewer main under the street. Each drain has a 'trap' and a vent pipe that prevent sewer gases and odors from entering the house.

If only one section of plumbing or fixture doesn't drain, it is usually a problem within the house. However, if no drains work, or the entire system drains slowly. If you are experiencing waste

water coming back up through the basement floor drain, the problem is probably outside of the house in the sewer service or the sewer main. Please notify the City if a sewer cleaning service is cleaning your private sewer line so the City can make certain nothing goes into the main sewer line.

You can reduce potential problems by following some simple rules:

- If you smell sewage but have no obvious problems, add a gallon of water to your floor drains and plumbing fixtures to insure your traps have water.
- Never flush disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, applicators, wet-wipes, rags, floss or other objects that might block or settle in your pipes.
- Please do not dump gas, grease, oil, antifreeze, paint or other foreign objects down drains.
- If using a garbage disposal, minimize amount of food and never dispose of cooking oils, greases or coffee grounds.
- Take immediate action if you suspect your sewer line is partially plugged.

Sewer Backups

If you suspect a sewer obstruction or back up and do not know where the blockage is, contact the City before contacting a drain cleaning company. The city will inspect the sewer main through a manhole to determine if there is a blockage in the sewer main line. If there is no problem in the sewer main line, the blockage is in your sewer service pipe between the sewer main and the house. Often times root invasion from mature trees into old sewer services causes an obstruction.

If it is determined that no blockage or restrictions exist in the City's sewer system, the property owner is advised to contact a professional plumber or drain cleaning service to have the private sewer service inspected. The City cannot make a recommendation for drain cleaning services. We do however request that you notify us after a sewer service has been cleaned as typically, the cleaning process pushes a significant amount of solids into the sewer main line and could cause a blockage, which could lead to an even bigger problem. The property owner is responsible for any repairs on the service line from the home to, and including, the connection at the sewer main line.

Inflow and infiltration (I & I)

I & I is also a potential cause of sewer backups. I & I refers to clear (rain) water getting into the sewer system. This might occur through cracks or leaks in sewer pipes and manholes or from sump pumps incorrectly connected to the sewer system. Particularly during large rain events, I & I can cause the sewer system to overflow resulting in sewer backups. Because of the potential for I & I to create system issues, City ordinance prohibits property owners from disposing of clear water into the sanitary sewer system. This includes water from any roof, surface or ground sump pump, or foundation drain.

Sump Pumps

If you use a sump pump in your basement, it is illegal to drain the water into the basement sewer drain or laundry tub. Sump pumps must be discharged outside of the house to the yard or drainway that will prevent the water from draining directly to the street.

If you have any questions or have any issues to report please call the City Hall front desk (360) 385-3000 or you can report a concern on our website:

<https://cityofpt.us/publicworks/page/report-concern>