



Sewer Line Blockages

Who is responsible for sewer service lines?



The City is responsible for the service line from the sewer main to the property line. The homeowner is responsible for anything that happens to the service line from the property line to the house. If a sewer service line needs to be replaced because it is collapsed or broken, the City and homeowner will share the costs on this basis. If a blockage is caused by roots from a tree on the City's boulevard, the City will be responsible for clearing the line.

However, the homeowner is fully responsible for any damage or blockage caused by prohibited items that enter the service line from the house, no matter where in the line the blockage is found.

What are prohibited items for sewer services?

According to the Water & Sewer Bylaw, the following items are not permitted to enter the sewer system, either by flushing down a drain or through any other method, because they can cause line blockages and other damage to sewer infrastructure:

- solid or viscous materials that can clog a sewer line;
- sand or similar materials;
- disposable wipes labeled as 'flushable wipes';
- hazardous waste;
- any type of fuel.

Liquid oils and grease, like bacon fat, butter, or salad dressing, will cool, harden and stick on the inside of your sewer pipe. Over time, this can build up and block the sewer line entirely, which may cause sewer to back up into your home. Adding hot water when you pour these items down the drain will move them further away from your tap, but not out of the sewer system entirely. Instead of pouring kitchen oils down the drain, consider pouring them into a disposable container until they cool, and then placing them in the garbage.

What are the main causes of sanitary sewer line blockages?

Sewer blockages can be caused by materials such as cooking oils, toys, or other objects that have been flushed down a sink or toilet drain. Disposable products labeled as 'flushable' also frequently do not break down quickly enough and can cause blockages. If there is a crack in a sewer line, tree roots may also be drawn to the moisture and get into the line.

What should I do if my sewer line is blocked?

As per the City's Plugged Services Policy, the City will only investigate a plugged or backed up sewer service if the owner has already had the service investigated by a plumber and the plumber is unable to remedy the issue. You may also request the City to inspect the sewer service with an inspection camera. There is a call out rate for these services.