

City of Kentwood



Water and Wastewater Department
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Sewer Backup Customer Support

What you need to
know
about clean up
and
how to protect
yourself

In the event of a sewer backup

The information provided in this brochure will answer a few of the questions that you may have about what to do in the event of a sewer backup and how to begin the process of cleaning up.

Who Pays for the Damage?

Property owners are responsible for the maintenance of the sewer service from the house to the property line. If an obstruction occurs on the property owners portion of the service, the property owner is responsible for all resulting damage.

The City of Kentwood is responsible for the sewer lateral (pipe from property line to the sewer main) and the sewer main line. As a result of the City's preventative maintenance program very few sewer backups occur. Generally the City is not responsible unless it is found negligent in its maintenance responsibilities. Sewer backups caused by heavy rain, vandalism and dumping of illegal or inappropriate materials are a few examples of sewer backups not considered negligence by the City.

Call your insurance agent as soon as possible. Some homeowner's policies provide coverage for sewer backups. However, many homeowners policies do NOT cover sewer or basement drain backups. In most cases, additional coverage is needed by purchasing an endorsement to the policy to cover sewer backups. Contact your insurance agent for more information on adding this coverage to your policy.

We had a sewer backup now what?

The City of Kentwood maintenance crews will determine if the problem exists in the main line sewer or between the house and the main line. If it is found between the house and the main line the

owner is required to have the blockage cleared and the City will return and Televiser from the house to the street to determine where the blockage is occurring. If the blockage is occurring in the main line sewer, City crews will remove the blockage and an investigation will be performed to determine the cause.

Cleanup

In the event of a sewer backup into your home or business it is important to begin clean up as soon as possible to minimize any health risks. If the backup is confined to a small area then clean up can be performed by the property owner. Large backups, however, should be cleaned by contacting a professional cleaning service.

Here are some steps you should take in the event of a sewer backup:

1. Think Safety First!
2. Evacuate if necessary
3. Stay out of flood area
4. Safely turn off electricity in affected area
5. Limit Exposure
6. Wear rubber boots, gloves and safety glasses
7. Disinfect
8. Have a city representative inspect the site and collect photos.

What Next?

Obtain a claim form from the City of Kentwood. Have the damage inspected by the City's insurance adjuster and forward all data to the finance department as explained on the claim form. Claims must be filed within 45 Days to be considered for reimbursement. All property damage must be inspected before clean up occurs if reimbursement is to be considered.



SOME THINGS ARE JUST NOT MEANT TO GO DOWN THE DRAIN.

Sewer problems usually happen at the most inopportune time, but the *majority* of sewer backups can be avoided for both YOU and your NEIGHBORS.

There are some things that people put down the drain in their homes that will always cause problems. Some of these things are: grease, oil, fats from cooking, diapers, baby wipes, cleaning wipes, rags and women's hygiene items such as tampons and pads to name a few.

These items will not dissolve and will get stuck in your drain pipes or the city sewer main. When in doubt, put the item in a plastic bag and dispose of it in your household trash.

WHERE DOES THE GREASE COME FROM?

Most of us know that grease is a byproduct of cooking. Grease is found in such things as:

- Meat fats
- Lard and Shortening
- Food Scraps
- Cooking Oil
- Butter & Margarine
- Dairy Products

Grease is usually washed into the plumbing system through the kitchen sink. This grease will solidify and stick to the inside of the sewer pipe in your sewer service or in the city mains. In time the grease will build up and block the pipes.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

The easiest way to help alleviate the potential for sewer backups is follow a few simple tips.

- Scrape food scraps and grease from pots, pans, utensils, plates and cooking surfaces into the trash for disposal. Some people keep the original container and scrape or pour it back when finished, then disposing of it when full.
- NEVER pour grease down a garbage disposal or drain.
- NEVER flush anything down the toilet that will not dissolve or break up in water.



Putting the wrong items down the drain will cost you money.

The State of Michigan passed a law, Act 222 of Public Acts of 2001, which clarifies the conditions under which municipalities are liable for sewer backups. The Act sets standards to determine the extent to which a municipality is liable for backups and establishes a process that affected persons must follow to seek compensation when a backup occurs.

The law states any claims must be submitted to the government in writing within 45 days. A claimant may seek compensation for property damage or personal injury by showing all of the following existed at the time of the event:

- the governmental agency was an appropriate government agency.
- the governmental agency knew, or in the exercise of reasonable diligence, should have known about the defect.
- the governmental agency, having the legal authority to do so, failed to take reasonable steps to remedy the defect in a reasonable time.
- the defect was a substantial proximate cause of the event and property damage or physical injury.

If you are interested in receiving additional information or have any questions concerning this law, please feel free to contact the City of Kentwood Public Works Department at (616) 554-0817 or visit the City's website at www.ci.kentwood.mi.us.