



## What can I do to prevent future backups?

Every situation is unique, but it may be possible to reduce the risk of sewer backups through plumbing improvements. When considering the options listed below, consult with a licensed plumber to determine the best approach for your property.

**Maintain your private sewer lateral.** A blocked or otherwise damaged private lateral can cause any number of expensive, inconvenient and hazardous problems, including sewer backups and sinkholes. To avoid these issues, periodically have your lateral inspected and cleaned by a licensed professional.

**Disconnect downspouts and other storm water drains.** Especially in older neighborhoods, downspouts, driveway drains and other private storm water connections often flow to private sewer laterals. When it rains, these connections can overburden laterals, leading to backups of raw sewage. Before disconnecting storm water lines, check to see how changes could affect surrounding properties and that you are following all city and county regulations.

**Install a backflow preventer.** Backflow preventers ensure water can only flow through your private sewer lateral in one direction – away from your home. When it rains, the backflow preventer closes off your lateral from the public sewer pipe to which it normally flows. Until the water levels in the public sewer pipe decrease, the backflow preventer remains closed. With a backflow preventer, you may need to limit water usage in your home during rain events.

**Install a sump pump or whole-house sewage ejector pump.** Sump pumps remove only storm water from inside a building and send it back up above ground and out onto the surrounding landscape or to a public sewer designed only to carry storm water. Whole-house sewage ejector pumps remove both storm water and wastewater, and they send the mixture to a public sewer pipe that's designed to carry both storm water and wastewater. Both pump types are typically installed in the basement.



## Understanding Wet-Weather Sewer Backups

Sewer backups are caused by a buildup in pressure in the sewer system that sends sewage back up into homes or businesses through floor drains, toilets or other plumbing fixtures. As more water enters the system, the pressure builds, and the sewage goes wherever it can – including back up into homes or businesses. Blocked pipes also can cause or contribute to sewer backups.



SD1

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## Who is responsible for sewer backups?

Issues in either private sewer laterals or public sewer pipes can lead to sewer backups.

**Private sewer laterals** are private property owners' responsibility. Your private sewer lateral is the pipe that connects your home's plumbing to the public sewer system. Your private lateral may be blocked or otherwise damaged if water is slow to drain from your home during dry weather or after a rain event. If you believe your private lateral is blocked or damaged, contact a licensed plumber to investigate. If your lateral damage is under the public roadway, you may be eligible for assistance from SD1. Learn more at [www.sd1.org/PrivateLateralRepairProgram](http://www.sd1.org/PrivateLateralRepairProgram).

**Public sewer pipes** are maintained by SD1. Public pipes that carry both wastewater and storm water are not designed to handle extreme amounts of storm water. SD1 proactively inspects and cleans all of our sewer pipes on a rotating basis. With a holistic approach to addressing storm water issues, SD1 prioritizes funding and improvements based on risk to public health, risk to sensitive areas and magnitude of any problems.

## Do I need to report all backups to SD1?

If you experience a sewer backup in your home or business, contact SD1 immediately at 859-578-7450 to report the issue. SD1 will respond to your call by sending a crew out to investigate what caused the backup and will later notify you about the results. SD1 considers customers' backup reports when prioritizing improvement projects. If your property has experienced two or more wet-weather backups in the last five years, you may qualify for SD1's Backup Assistance Program. Learn more by visiting [www.sd1.org/seweremergency](http://www.sd1.org/seweremergency) or calling 859-578-7450 and asking for the program coordinator.

You also should begin cleanup and call your homeowners insurance provider as soon as possible to report damage.

## Can I purchase insurance for sewer backups?

Insurance for damage caused by sewer backups is available and relatively inexpensive, but this may be a separate policy from your homeowners insurance. If you pursue such a policy or a rider to your existing policy, check to see if it covers both repair and cleanup costs that can result from flooding and sewer backups. You may also wish to pursue insurance for your private sewer lateral to recoup repair costs should it collapse or otherwise become damaged.

## Who is responsible for cleanup and repair after sewer backups?

When extreme weather is the cause of sewer backups, individual property owners are responsible for repairs and cleanup on their private property. Most weather-related backups occur because too much rain falls in too short a time, exceeding the sewer system's level of service. SD1 is only responsible for property damage due to sewer backups when the public sewer system has failed and the failure could have been prevented.

### Cleanup Tips

- ▶ Keep children and pets out of the flooded area
- ▶ Wear rubber boots, gloves and work clothes to minimize skin contact with the water, which may be contaminated with sewage
- ▶ Do not eat, drink, smoke or touch your face while in the flooded area
- ▶ Take care not to slip on wet surfaces

