



# Understanding 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.

Blocked or damaged *private sewer laterals* can also cause or contribute to sewer backups. Private laterals – the pipes that connect a home’s plumbing to the public sewer system – are the responsibility of the property owner. If water is slow to drain from your home during dry weather or after a rain event, the private lateral may be blocked or damaged. If you believe your lateral is blocked or damaged, contact a licensed plumber.

## Preventing Sewer Backups

Every situation is unique, but you can reduce the risk of a sewer backup through plumbing improvements. When considering these options, consult a licensed plumber to determine the best approach for your property.

- **Routine maintenance.** Periodically have your lateral inspected and cleaned by a licensed professional.
- **Disconnect your downspouts and other storm water drains.** If these flow to your lateral, this can overburden the lateral when it rains. 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.** These devices ensure that water can only flow through your private lateral in one direction – away from your home. When it rains, the backflow preventer closes off your lateral from the public sewer system. When water levels in the public system return to normal, the backflow preventer reopens. Please note: with a backflow preventer, you need to limit water usage in your home during rain events. SD1’s Backup Assistance Program was designed to help property owners cover the cost of installing these devices. *SD1 has partnered with the City of Covington on the Backup Assistance Program. Covington residents can find more information at <https://www.covington.gov/government/departments/public-works/storm-water-management>.*
- **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 the surrounding landscape or to a public sewer designed to carry only storm water. Whole-house ejector pumps remove both storm water and wastewater, and they send the mixture to a public sewer pipe.

## If You Experience a Backup

Contact SD1 immediately at (859) 578-7450 (Option 1). SD1 will send a crew to investigate what caused the backup. SD1 considers customer backup reports when prioritizing improvement projects. If your property has experienced a backup, you may qualify for SD1’s Backup Assistance Program.

When extreme weather causes a sewer backup, individual property owners are responsible for repairs and cleanup of their private property. Most weather-related backups occur when 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. During cleanup, keep children and pets out of the flooded area; wear rubber boots, gloves and work clothes; do not eat, drink, smoke or touch your face while in the flooded area; and take care not to slip on wet surfaces.

## Sewer Backup Insurance

Please note that while insurance for damage caused by sewer backups is available and relatively inexpensive, it may be a separate policy from your homeowner’s insurance. If you pursue such a policy or a rider to your existing policy, ensure 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.