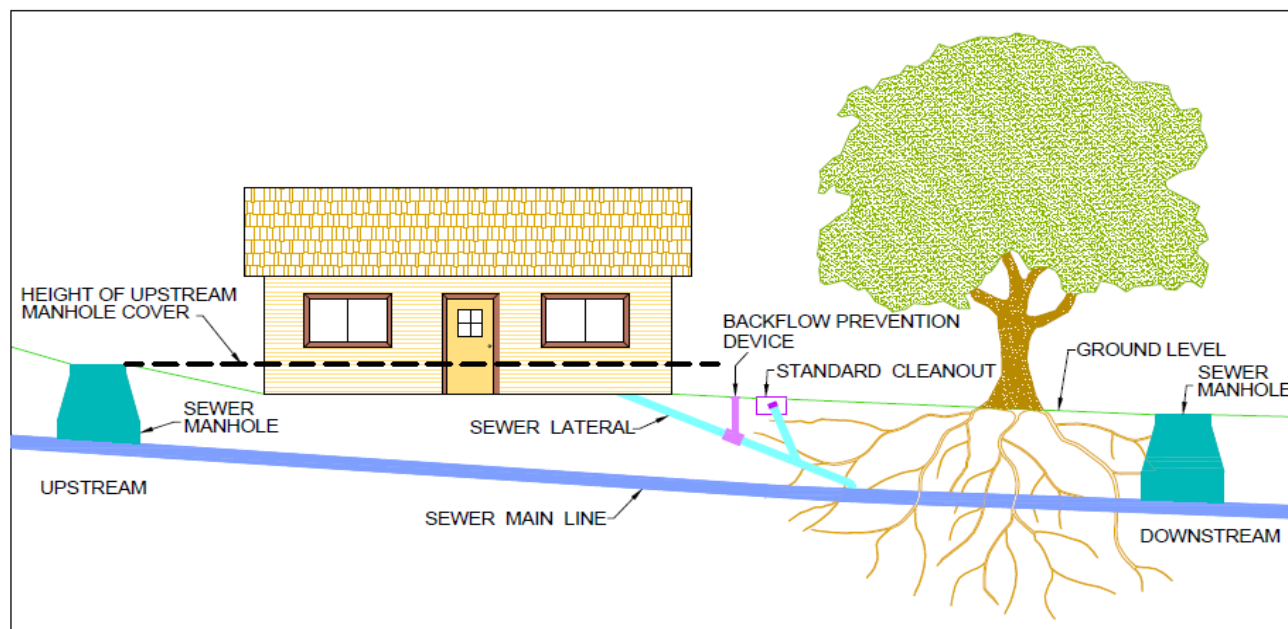


SAN MATEO COUNTY SEWER INFORMATION GUIDE



The diagram to the left depicts a typical sewer configuration. The sewer lateral carries sewage from the house to the mainline. If a blockage occurs due to root intrusion for instance, sewage will begin to backup until it reaches the lowest outlet. In this case, sewage will backup into the house before overflowing from the next upstream manhole. A backflow prevention device installed on the lateral will prevent the backup from entering the house.

What is a sanitary sewer?

A sanitary sewer is a system of pipes normally located in the street or an easement that are solely designed to transport sewage to the treatment plant. The County of San Mateo Public Works Department maintains the sanitary sewer pipes, also called sewer mains, within the 10 sewer districts that are operated by the County.

What is a sewer lateral?

A sewer lateral is the sewer pipe that carries wastewater from the sanitary fixtures and floor drains inside your home or business to the District's sewer main. The property owner is responsible for maintaining the sewer lateral from the property structure to and into the District's sewer main. Occasionally the sewer lateral becomes blocked and the sewage cannot flow to the sewer main. This is what is commonly called a backup.

What causes sewer backups?

Some of the most common causes of sewer backups include:

- Buildup of grease, debris or foreign objects in the sewer lateral or District sewer main.
- Partial or complete blockage caused by tree root intrusion into sewer pipes.
- Sewer line collapse caused by old and deteriorated sewer pipes.
- Excess water entering the sewer system either from illegal pipe connections or inflow of rainwater during wet weather seasons.

How can backups be prevented?

The best way to protect against backups is through regular cleaning and maintenance of sewer pipes. Here are a few tips that will help:

- Roots: Don't plant trees or large shrubs near sewer lines. Roots grow toward breaks and cracks in search of a water source. If roots get inside the pipe, they form root balls that clog the

line. Products are available which chemically treat the roots to reduce the problem.

- Grease: Dispose of grease and fats with your trash – don't put them down the drain! Grease collects and hardens inside the pipes and forms a plug.
- Illegal plumbing connections: Don't connect backyard drains, sump pumps and other drainage systems to the sanitary sewer. It's illegal and debris and silt will clog your line. Consult a plumber to undo any illegal connections.

Do I need a backflow prevention device?

If the elevation of the shower drain, bathtub drain or toilet, for instance, is lower than the elevation of the next upstream manhole cover of the public sewer, then you need a sewer backflow prevention device (see diagram above). A backflow prevention device can be installed on your sewer lateral to reduce the likelihood of sewage entering

your home or business through low-lying plumbing fixtures when there's a blockage in the lateral or public main.

What You Need to Know About Backflow.

The County of San Mateo is committed to minimizing sewer backups through regular maintenance of District sewer mains, mainline replacement and public education. Sewer lines can become blocked due to buildup of debris in them. When this occurs, sewage is stopped by the blockage and flows backwards toward the first possible outlet. Most of the time that is a manhole. However, sometimes that outlet point is a fixture in a home or business. It is possible to protect your property from sewage backups with a plumbing fixture called a backflow prevention device. The Uniform Plumbing Code requires installation of a backflow prevention device to protect plumbing fixtures that are below the elevation of the nearest upstream manhole. You can view the County Ordinance Code for more information on backflow prevention device requirements:

http://library.municode.com/ca/san_mateo_county

What if my sewer backs up?

Call the Public Works Department as soon as you begin to experience a backup and County crews will respond. When a sewage backup occurs, Public Works crews will first check the District's sewer main to verify that the pipe is open and sewage is flowing. If the sewer main is found to be clear, and the property has a standard property line cleanout, crews will provide courtesy service to clear the blockage between the property line cleanout and the sewer main. If the blockage is found to be between the house or business and the property line cleanout, it is the responsibility of the property owner to call a licensed plumber or drain cleaning service to correct the problem. Public Works staff is on duty 24-hours a day, seven days a week. If you see or suspect a sewer overflow, call the Public Works Department at (650) 363-4100. During non-working hours, your call will automatically be forwarded to after-hours

support and a maintenance crew will be dispatched to your address.

Sanitary sewer systems are designed to handle three types of waste products:

- wastewater
- human body waste
- toilet paper

Keep your sanitary sewer working properly!

DO: Collect grease in a container and dispose of it in the garbage.
DO: Place food scraps in the garbage for disposal with solid waste.
DO: Place a wastebasket in the bathroom to dispose of solid waste. (Wipes, disposable diapers, and other personal hygiene products do not belong in the sewer system.)

DON'T: Pour grease, fats, and oils from cooking down the drain.

DON'T: Use the sewer to dispose of food scraps.

DON'T: Use the toilet as a wastebasket for garbage or chemicals. These items can kill "good" bacteria used for sewage treatment, cost much more to treat, and can enter the Bay.

DON'T: Plant trees with shallow, spreading root systems near your sewer lateral. Tree roots seek water sources, such as from cracked sewer lines. Once the roots have penetrated the line through cracks, the roots can create a dense mat and trap material, creating a blockage.

Follow these simple DOs and DON'Ts. You can help prevent sewer backups and avoid expensive plumbing and cleanup bills.

Para información en Español, llame America Sanchez al teléfono (650) 363-4100.



Burlingame Hills Sewer Maintenance District

Crystal Springs County Sanitation District

Devonshire County Sanitation District

Edgewood Sewer Maintenance District

Emerald Lake Heights Sewer Maintenance District

Fair Oaks Sewer Maintenance District

Harbor Industrial Sewer Maintenance District

Kensington Square Sewer Maintenance District

Oak Knoll Sewer Maintenance District

Scenic Heights Sewer Maintenance District

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