

GUIDE TO SEWER BACKUPS



www.whitecourt.ca

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES
KEEPING YOU INFORMED.

WHAT CAUSES SEWER BACKUP?

Most often a sewer backup is caused by a plugged wastewater service line connection. Over time, tree roots, grease and other debris can build up in the line, eventually causing a blockage.

STEPS TO PREVENT A SEWER BACKUP

Don't flush anything other than human wastes and toilet paper:

Don't flush products down the toilet that may cause a blockage. For example, **DO NOT FLUSH:** dental floss, hair, rags, wipes (including flushable wipes), medication, condoms, sanitary products, bandages, food, trash, cat litter, Q-tips, or any other garbage.

Never pour oil or grease down the sink or into the toilet:

Grease tends to harden and cause other items to get stuck, creating clogs. They also tend to cling to the sides of pipes and create a build-up over time, which eventually leads to a large blockage.



Store it. Pour grease/oil/fat into a can or glass jar with a lid, and store until full - then dispose with the garbage.



Wipe residual grease from dishes, pots and pans with disposable paper towel prior to washing the dishes.

Plant trees and large shrubs a minimum of fifteen feet away from sewer lines:

Roots grow toward breaks or cracks in the line to reach moisture and nutrients. When roots get inside the pipe, they clog it. Homeowners should choose small, slow-growing species with less aggressive root systems. Trees which should be avoided include willow, poplar, silver maples, and certain ash trees.



Install and maintain a sewer backwater valve:

While a sewer backwater valve does not prevent your service line from getting plugged and backing up, it can prevent sewage from backing up in the event the main line becomes obstructed. If your home does not have a backwater valve, have a certified plumber add one to your line. The valve works by closing when water comes into it from the wrong direction. The valve must have a clean out and be fully accessible for maintenance. Once installed, clean the valve periodically to ensure it continues to work properly.

Do not connect sump pumps, weeping tile, or eavestrough downspouts to your sanitary sewer. The debris and silt will clog your line.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Storing items in the basement:

Homeowners sometimes store valuable items in their basements. If they must be stored in the basement, keep items in water-proof containers and off the floor.

Insurance:

Check with your homeowner's insurance agent or company to review your coverage. Sewer backup coverage may require an addition to your insurance policy.

Health and Safety:

Contact Alberta Health Services if you suspect sewage contamination. Be sure to comply with their recommendations about using protective measures. Do not try to save carpets, clothing or bedding that have been exposed to sewage.

Consider hiring a professional cleaning company familiar with cleaning sewage contaminated basements. Keep children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed. Stay away from electrical equipment. Have a qualified electrician assess the situation, if uncertain of potential electrical hazards.

TOWN OF WHITECOURT - INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

5004 52 Avenue, Box 509, Whitecourt Alberta T7S 1N6

Phone: 780.778.2273 Fax: 780.778.2062 Email: administration@whitecourt.ca

www.whitecourt.ca

Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Closed between 12:00 noon and 12:30 p.m.)

GUIDE TO SEWER BACKUPS



www.whitecourt.ca

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES
KEEPING YOU INFORMED.

RESPONSIBILITIES

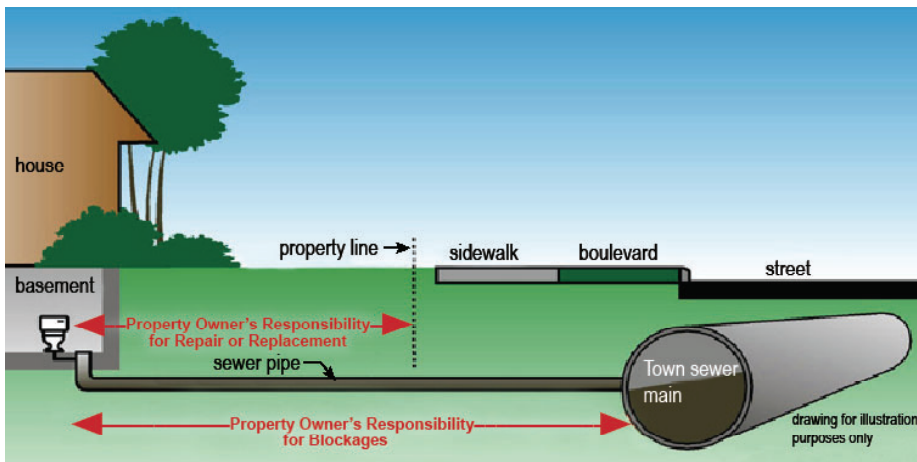
Homeowner's Responsibilities

The homeowner is responsible for blockages that occur within service connections, from the building to the main sewer line, which is typically located in the centre of your street.

Town of Whitecourt's Responsibilities

The Town of Whitecourt has a regular program of inspecting and cleaning sanitary sewer mains. Sewer system maintenance will be completed as per a five year rotation schedule.

The Town will repair or replace the portion of a service connection that lies within the road allowance (between your property line and the sewer main) in the event of material failure. The Town of Whitecourt is not responsible for repair of inferior connections at the property line.



IN THE EVENT OF A SEWER BACKUP:

1. Call your insurance agent/ company as soon as possible.
2. Call the Town of Whitecourt (to check the main line)
 - 780-778-2273 (Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm)
 - 1-866-477-1221 (after hours)
3. If the Town of Whitecourt verifies the main is clear, call a certified plumber who will identify the problem, and, if necessary, clear the blockage or obstruction in the building service connection. The connection is the pipe running from your house to the sewer in the street (also referred to as a sewer lateral).
4. If a certified plumber has been in and there still seems to be a problem, the homeowner should obtain the services of a video inspection company, which may be found by doing an online search for "Sewer Line Inspection". The company will video the connection and will provide a report. The report must include locations, measurements, a depth of:
 - the connection, from the foundation to the sewer main;
 - obstructions; and
 - connection defects.The company must also clearly mark these locations in the field.
5. After obtaining a video and report, call the Town of Whitecourt at 780-778-2273 and explain that you have a video and report to be picked up. The video and report should be clearly identified with the property owner's name, phone number and address.
6. Town of Whitecourt staff will review the video and report, will identify the problem (e.g. tree roots, structural deficiencies) and determine whose responsibility it is to fix. We will then contact the homeowner with the results of the assessment.
7. If the cleaning or repair is the homeowner's responsibility, the homeowner should obtain quotes from contractors (they can be searched online under "Sewer Contractors"), or contact the Town of Whitecourt for known contractors in the area.

As a preventative measure, have your wastewater service line connection cleaned regularly to ensure it is free-flowing.