

# SEWER BACK-UP PREVENTION INFORMATION

When a sewer back-up occurs it is usually due to a blockage in either the private service line or in the City main. The blockage is usually caused by items that have been improperly disposed of such as grease and paper products. Please be aware of disposal items and dispose of them in the proper manner. Proper disposal will promote system efficiency and prevent backups, resulting in less inconvenience to users. Tree roots can also become problematic.

## GREASE

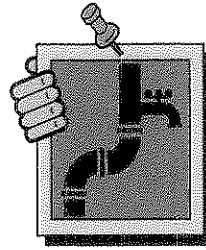
Cooking oil should be poured into a heat resistant container and disposed of, after it cools off, in the garbage can, not the drain. Washing grease down the drain with hot water is not a proper method of disposal. This grease goes down the drain, cools off, and solidifies either in the drain, the property owner's line, or in the main sewer. When this happens, the line constricts, and eventually clogs.

## PAPER PRODUCTS

Paper towels, disposable (and cloth) diapers, and feminine products cause a great deal of problems in all sewer lines. These products do not deteriorate quickly, as does bathroom tissue. They become lodged in portions of the lines where there is an accumulation of any type of debris, and dam up the line, causing a sewer back-up. These products should also be disposed of in a garbage can.

## ROOTS

Shrub and tree roots seeking moisture will enter cracks in the sewer lines and, as they grow, will cause significant damage to the pipe. The damaged sewer line will allow debris to build up causing a back-up. Replacing existing lines with new plastic pipe and not planting trees or shrubs near sewer lines are helpful in preventing roots from entering sewer lines.



"Copper Sulfate", which may be purchased from a plumber or hardware store, is effective in killing roots when poured into a sewer drain system. The product should be carefully used according to the directions and labeling. If there is an ongoing problem with roots in the sewer system, it is recommended that a plumber be hired to cut the roots at least annually.

# OTHER SEWER INFORMATION

## SEWER ODORS

If sewer odors are present inside the house, check the "P-trap" under each drain to ensure that the trap has water in it to prevent odors from escaping the system. Floor drains and sinks that are only used occasionally may need to be flushed with water periodically to keep the "P-trap" filled. Sewer vents located on the roof should be inspected periodically and kept clear of bird nests, leaves and debris to allow odors to escape.

## NEEDLES

Hypodermic needles disposed of in the sewer-wastewater system are dangerous, and possible deadly, to the persons who work with the systems. There should be no disposal (by flushing or other means) of hypodermic needles into the sewer collection system. The proper method of disposal is to re-cap the needle and put it into a sharps container or other approved receptacle. The container should be discarded at an approved disposal location or in accordance with the instruction of a pharmacist or medical provider.

# MAINTENANCE OF PRIVATE SEWER LATERALS

Homeowners should consider implementing the following practices to reduce sewer system problems:

1. Contacting a licensed professional plumber to clean the sewer of accumulated debris and tree roots. The professional can sometimes inspect the sewer line with a video camera to determine the overall condition.
2. Learn the location of the sewer line on the property. Do not plant trees or shrubs, or place improvements in the vicinity of the system.
3. Inspect the sewer lateral to determine the type of pipe used. Some older lines are constructed with "orangeburg" or tile pipe, which are easily invaded by tree roots and are more prone to collapse and blockage. If necessary, these lines should be replaced.
4. If frequent sewer back-ups are experienced, a properly installed backflow prevention device may prevent or reduce the damage caused by back-ups. A properly trained and licensed professional should be consulted regarding installation and maintenance of these devices.
5. Use biodegradable laundry detergent for clothes washing. Conventional laundry soaps have a grease base which overtime will combine with other products in the drain system to build up and eventually clog the system. Laundering with full loads creates more water flow and helps flush the system of debris.

