

## How can I help prevent sewer backups?

- Use your toilet for its intended purpose. Do not flush things that will not dissolve or do not break down in water.
- Do not flush diapers, wipes, sanitary or other similar types of products. Put them in your household trash.
- Do not plant trees or shrubs over your sewer lateral. Roots can penetrate pipe joints and clog the pipe.
- Keep sewers fat-free by wiping grease from dishes before washing—do NOT pour grease down the drain! In time, grease will build up and block the pipe.
- Use plenty of water with garbage disposals to ensure that disposed materials do not lodge in sewer laterals, and do NOT dispose of items such as potato peelings or bones through the garbage disposal.
- Regularly clean sewer laterals.
- Have an approved backwater valve installed.

**CITY OF MENASHA**  
**100 MAIN STREET, SUITE 200**  
**MENASHA, WISCONSIN**  
**920-967-3600**



## SEWER BACKUP GUIDE

### CITY OF MENASHA



For more information contact:

City of Menasha  
Public Works Facility  
920-967-3620

## Sewer Backups.... A Messy Situation

There is nothing worse than coming home to find that sewage has backed up into your basement. If you have an improved basement, it can be even more devastating. It is costly too.

### What causes a sewer backup?

There are a number of reasons why a sewer backup can occur. Grease, hair or solid materials, roots, disposable diapers, sanitary products or other debris can become lodged in sewer lines. Items, trash, rocks and bricks may be stuffed down manholes by vandals. Sometimes pipe breaks or cracks occur; or an inundation of water beyond system capacity. Most often a backup is caused by a plugged sewer lateral (the pipe running from a house to the city sewer main) for which the property owner is responsible. Less often the city sewer main line is plugged.

### What does the City do to help prevent a sewer backup?

Among other things, the City regularly cleans sewer mains as part of its maintenance of the system.

### What Should I Do If My Sewer Backs Up?

Call (920) 967-3620 between 7:00 a.m.—3 p.m., Monday—Friday (Public Works Facility). After-hours call (920) 967-3500 (Menasha Police Department general number).

The city crew will check the public sewer main. If the main is found in good operating condition, the likely cause of the backup is your sewer lateral.

### The blockage is cleared, now what?

Sewage backups pose a potential health risk. You may elect to clean yourself or hire a restoration company. If you opt to clean your basement; your belongings, floors and walls will be contaminated and must be properly handled to remove the health risk to your family. Please contact the City of Menasha Health Department for guidance on proper cleanup at (920) 967-3520.

If you elect to hire an outside firm consider getting quotes for the work. Request that quotes itemize the amount for labor, fans, dehumidifiers, sanitizing, etc. If the company indicates there is a need to modify structures, such as walls, make sure you get an estimate for that work as well so you know how much it will cost you.

### Who will pay for this clean up???

**Most often the cost for cleanup is the responsibility of the homeowner, even if it is related to a situation in the main sewer line.** In order for the City to be considered liable for these types of damages, there would have had to have been prior notice of the need for a main repair and it

was not fixed within a reasonable amount of time or that preventative maintenance was not performed according to the maintenance schedule established by the Public Works Department. The City is not liable for acts of nature.

If you feel the damage was caused by City negligence and you wish to file a claim, you may do so by picking up a claim form from City Hall, 100 Main Street, Suite 200, Menasha, WI 54952 or visit the City's website at [www.cityofMenasha-wi.gov](http://www.cityofMenasha-wi.gov). Return the completed form to the City Clerk, 100 Main Street, Suite 200, along with copies of the repair estimates or invoices and documentation of the damages, including photos. The claim will be reviewed by the City Attorney. **Again, there is no guarantee that the City will reimburse for the damages** and homeowners are encouraged to contact their insurance carrier to see if coverage is available.

### Better Safe Than Sorry.

To be safe do not store valuable items in the basement. If they must be stored in the basement, use waterproof containers and keep things off the floor.

#### Sewer Backup Insurance

Homeowners are encouraged to carry sewer backup insurance as part of their homeowner's policy. Limits should be reviewed to ensure adequate coverage, especially if there is an improved basement.