

City of \_\_\_\_\_

What You Should Know and How You Should Protect Yourself

City of \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Website \_\_\_\_\_

Occasionally, a blockage in a sewer line will result in a backup of sanitary sewage into a private home. If you experience a backup, immediately contact the City of \_\_\_\_\_ Public Works Department. The following information will answer the basic questions about what to do if you experience a backup and how to begin cleaning.

**INSURANCE**

The City is not automatically responsible when a sewer backup occurs. There are many reasons for backups which the City cannot control. For example, people dumping inappropriate items such as grease or diapers into the system can create a blockage. Tree roots can grow into and obstruct the lines. Generally, the City is responsible only if it was negligent in maintaining the main sewer lines.

Sometimes, your homeowners' insurance will pay for sewer backups. Not all policies have this coverage and you should check with your agent.

If you feel damage occurred as a direct result of the City's negligence, you can file an insurance claim by calling the City.

**CLEAN UP**

For large clean ups, you should call a cleaning service. Your insurance carrier might have suggestions on which service to use or you can look in the Yellow Pages. For smaller backups you can clean yourself, use a solution of 1 cup of bleach to five gallons of water. To reduce health hazards, thoroughly clean the areas affected by the backup as soon as possible. The Florida Department of Health suggests the following:

If a sewage backup occurs in your home, secure the area affected from access. Keep children out of wet areas that are affected by sewage. If your entire home has been saturated, abandon the home until all affected areas, including but not limited to carpets, rugs, sheetrock, drywall, and baseboards, have been cleaned and decontaminated.

If sewage overflows in open areas or streets, etc., avoid these areas and keep children out of these areas. Do not let children play in flood waters as these waters may be affected by sewage.

If you live in a low-lying or flood-prone area, be advised that the ground in your area may be saturated due to the heavy rainfalls during and after the storm. You should use household water as little as possible to prevent sewage backups in your home.

If there has been a backflow of sewage into the house, the following measures should be taken to ensure proper clean-up:

- Walls, hard-surfaced floors and many other household surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of 1 cup of bleach to five gallons of water.
- Thoroughly disinfect surfaces that come in contact with food and children's play areas. Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry-clean.
- Items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, must be air dried in the sun and sprayed thoroughly with a disinfectant. Steam-clean all carpeting.
- Fiberboard, fibrous insulation and disposable filters that have contacted floodwater or sewage should be replaced in your heating and air conditioning system.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during clean-up.

Be careful about mixing household cleaners and disinfectants, as combining certain types of products can produce toxic fumes and result in injury or death.

It can be difficult to throw away items in a home, particularly those with sentimental value. However, keeping certain items soaked by sewage or floodwaters may be unhealthy. In general, materials that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried within 24-48 hours should be discarded.

If you are having problems in areas served by sewer systems, please contact your utility company to insure they are aware of problems in your area.

If you have questions, please call the Health Department's Environmental Health office at 850-245-4250.

### **SOME OTHER TIPS**

Use outside air to dry your home.

Open windows and doors and use an exhaust fan to remove moist air from the house.

If available, use a room de-humidifier. Empty it often.

If your basement is flooded, pump the water in stages – about one-third per day. Make sure the level of floodwater outside is below the level of the basement floor. If not, do not pump the basement all at once because the saturated soil could cause the basement walls to collapse. Wear a mask to prevent inhaling contaminated dust, especially if you have allergies. Consult your physician if you have questions.

Open, clean, decontaminate, and thoroughly dry cavities in walls, floors, and ceilings.

Release any water or mud that has been trapped in walls, ceilings or floor cavities.

Allow walls to dry from the inside out.

Remove all interior wall finishing materials and insulation.

Throw out any wet insulation, moist plaster, wallboard and paneling.

If you think you might have materials containing asbestos in your home, call the Florida Department of Health at 850-245-4300.

If any materials are still wet or moist after 24-48 hours, you should assume they have mold growing on them.

### **Food**

Throw out any opened food or packaged foods that are not waterproof. Commercially canned foods can be salvaged if the labels are removed and the cans thoroughly washed. The cans should be disinfected by wiping the entire surface with a laundry bleach and water mixture and

rinsed in clear water. Home-canned foods require additional care. After the jars containing home-canned foods have been washed and disinfected, the jars should be boiled for ten minutes before using.

### **Wet Appliances**

If your hot water heater became wet due to flooding, it should be discarded. The insulation typically can't be replaced and the burner or heating element might become damaged and could cause an explosion or fire if used. If in doubt consult a service professional before using. If the furnace was flooded, have it inspected and serviced by a professional furnace service before using.

### **Record Keeping**

Take pictures of damage for your records.

Keep all receipts for all work done.

Write a description of the extent of damage.

Record date and time of occurrence and note which sewer areas surcharged– floor drain, lower level toilet, laundry tub and the like.

### **HELP PREVENT BACKUPS**

The following items should be disposed of in your trash can, NOT in the sanitary sewer system:

Diapers

Paper towels

Cooking grease

Food (do NOT use the disposal for all food items)

### **REMINDER**

Property owners are responsible for the maintenance, repair, and cleaning of the service line from the house to the City main line.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information, contact the City of \_\_\_\_\_ Public Works Department at \_\_\_\_\_ or visit the city's website at \_\_\_\_\_.

For more information on clean ups, visit the Florida Department of Health's website at [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us)