

MODEL SANITARY SEWER BACKUP LETTER TO RESIDENTS

Dear Property Owner:

The City of _____ operates and maintains a sanitary sewer collection system that serves all properties within the City. The City performs regular, routine maintenance on its sanitary sewer lines to ensure they are in good working condition. Maintenance of the sanitary sewer system is done pursuant to the City's Sanitary Sewer Maintenance Policy. Blockages in the City's main sewer lines or in individual service connections may happen on occasion and can cause water and sewage to back-up into a person's home. If a blockage occurs in the City's main sewer line, the Public Works Department will take action to clear the blockage. The City tries to have employees available at all times to respond to sewer back-ups. When the City learns of your sewer back-up, our goal is to have employees immediately begin working with you to determine the cause and to clear any blockage in the main sewer line.

The sewer line from your home, business or other property to the City sewer main is your responsibility. **That means that you as the property owner are responsible for clearing any blockages.** Property owners must schedule service and pay the cost of clearing any blockage located in the individual sewer line on their property.

It is important to take prompt action to start clearing a blocked sewer line as failure to act in a timely manner may increase damage to your property as well as to neighboring properties. Informing the City of any sewer back-up is critical so the line can be inspected to ensure the blockage is not in the City's main sewer line.

Sewer line blockages are commonly caused by plant roots growing into the line. Blockages may also be caused by the improper disposal of items such as grease, diapers, washing machine lint and other items flushed down the toilet. Because the City cannot prevent the inappropriate disposal of items into the sewer system, even with a routine maintenance and inspection program it is impossible to prevent all sewer blockages and back-ups. It is important to note that regardless of where a blockage is found, in the City's main sewer line or in an individual sewer line, **the property owner is responsible for the clean up costs in most cases.** The City, or its insurer, will pay for clean up costs only if the City negligently failed to maintain its sewer line.

In the event of a sewer back-up you should document your actions. Try to take pictures of any damage caused by the sewer backup and write down information about the contacts you make and any actions taken. This information will be of value if your loss is covered by insurance.

For all sewer back-ups, in the interest of health and safety, property owners must make sure that any water, sewage or other debris is thoroughly cleaned in an appropriate manner. It is important that wet areas are disinfected and dried. Failure to properly clean the entire contaminated area can result in adverse health consequences. Detailed information about proper cleaning after a sewer back-up is available from the City's website (_____) and the Florida Department of Health (www.doh.state.fl.us).

I hope you find this information helpful. A brief description of the steps a property owner should take in the event of a sewer backup is attached to this letter. If you have questions regarding the City's sanitary sewer maintenance program, sewer back-up response or a specific incident, please contact the Public Works Department at _____ . Thank you.

Sincerely,

MODEL SEWER BACKUP PROCEDURES FOR RESIDENTS

1. Call the City of _____ immediately at _____ to report the sewer backup. The City will work with you to identify the location of the blockage. If the blockage is in one of the City's main sewer lines, the City will attempt to clear the blockage.

2. Make arrangements for the blockage to be cleared if it is determined to be in the individual sewer line to your property. Remember you are responsible for scheduling and paying for service to clear such a blockage. Many local plumbers can provide this service.

3. If you have homeowners or another type of property insurance coverage, notify your insurance agent of the sewer backup to see if such a claim is covered.

4. Clean the entire contaminated area in a safe and professional manner. It is a good idea to use the services of a reputable company experienced in cleaning up after sewer backups. For convenience purposes only, listed below are companies that provide cleanup services in the City of _____. The City does not recommend or endorse the services of any particular company. Other companies may provide similar services and it is important that you consider your options before making a selection.

Name: _____ Phone: _____
Name: _____ Phone: _____
Name: _____ Phone: _____

5. Document the actions you take (calls, contacts, costs) in response to the sewer backup.