

SEWER MAINTENANCE

The Department of Public Works is responsible for maintenance of 324 miles of sanitary sewer and 290 miles of storm sewer.

Q & A

Q: What is the difference between sanitary sewer and storm sewer?

A: The sanitary sewer conveys waste such as dirty dish water, toilet or bathtub wastewater to the City's wastewater treatment plant. The storm sewer conveys "clear" water from rooftops, driveways, sump pumps and downspouts back into our rivers, ponds and lakes.

Q: What are sanitary and storm laterals?

A: A sanitary lateral is a sewer pipe that connects the plumbing from inside the home to the sanitary sewer main in the street. The storm lateral is what a sump pump or yard drain discharges into, which connects to the storm sewer main in the street which leads to back to ponds or riverways.

Q: Who is responsible for maintenance and replacement of laterals?

A: The sanitary and storm laterals are the responsibility of the property owner from where they connect on private property to the City's mains. The exception would be a storm lateral that connects to a City "mini sewer." In this case, the owner would be responsible from the connection on their private property to the property line

Q: I have a blockage in my sanitary lateral and the sewer cleaner guy said it was caused by the tree roots from the City tree in my terrace. Will the City pay to have my problem fixed?

A: No. As mentioned above, the lateral is the property owner's responsibility.

Q: Why does the City televise sewers? Will they televise my lateral if I need it done?

A: No. The City does not have the proper equipment or manpower to run a camera down private laterals. City owned sewer lines are televised to determine the condition of the sewer pipes. The television reports show us any cracks, breaks, obstructions, gaps or missing sections of pipe. This allows us to identify problems and refurbish or replace the mains accordingly.

Q: What should I do if I have storm water drainage issues in my yard?

A: If the problem is that a neighbor is draining their downspouts or sump pump directly onto your property, a city ordinance may prohibit this. In this case, you may contact the City Inspection Division by calling 832-6411 to discuss this with an inspector. If the problem is just that your property is low, and water tends to accumulate or pond, you may make an appointment with an Engineering Technician by calling 832-6474 to review your situation to see if there is anything the City can do to help improve the situation.

Q: I had a drainage problem and the City installed a yard drain in my rear yard. It seems to plug up with leaves, etc. Whose responsibility is it to keep the drain clear?

A: It is the property owner's responsibility to keep the drain free from any obstructions that may restrict flow into it. By doing so, it will help to keep your yard draining properly, especially during heavier rains.

Q: Is it illegal to discharge my sump pump into the sanitary sewer?

A: Yes. It is always illegal to do this. Only waste water, as mentioned earlier, is allowed to drain into the sanitary sewer. A fine of up to \$200/day may result if you pump the clear water into the sanitary sewer.

Q: Is it okay to dump my grass clippings or other debris onto the street or curb inlets?

A: No. Grass clippings are a source of phosphorous, the nutrient that turns our rivers and lakes green with algae growth. Clippings can be left in the lawn by mulching or hauled to the Glendale Avenue yard waste site for a fee. Any grass clippings or debris left on the street could wash down the curb and into an inlet when it rains. This, in turn, could contaminate the storm water or cause a blockage of the inlet, preventing rainwater from draining off the streets.

Q: Do we rescue animals caught in sewers?

A: No. The Department of Public Works does not rescue animals caught within the sewers.

Q: What should I do if I have a sanitary sewer back-up?

A: Most often a sewer back-up is isolated to the property with the back-up. It could be something was flushed down the toilet that is lodged in the pipe, roots in the lateral or even a broken lateral. You may find it easiest to attempt to clean it out yourself or just contact a plumber or sewer cleaning company to do it for you. If other people in your neighborhood are having back-ups at the same time, it could be an issue with the City's main sewer line in the street. If this is the case, call 832-5580. If you do have a contractor come to clean out the lateral, check to see if they have video-taping capabilities. It will cost extra, but once the sewer is cleaned out, they can make a video of the sewer to help determine what the cause of the problem was. Also, if a repair is needed, it will be easier to get estimates with a video.

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For more information please visit: www.appleton.org or call 832-5580.