

The Village of Westchester is aware of the problems residents have during storms. Please keep the following in mind:

During a heavy rain the storm sewers “charge” or fill to capacity. The water then takes the path of least resistance. Please read the following information and takes steps to help deter the water from ending up in your home or business.

### **Steps You Can Take to Alleviate Property Flooding and Basement Backups**

- Recycle newspapers, glass, plastic bags and other materials to reduce waste. Recycling helps keeps trash from being washed into the sewer system, possibly resulting in a blockage.
- Recycle yard waste or use it to make compost. Raking leaves and grass into streets allows yard waste to wash into storm sewers, causing blockages and possible street flooding.
- Trash around storm water drains should be removed. If the street requires cleaning, the city or municipality responsible for maintaining them should be contacted.
- Properly dispose of yard waste (grass clippings and leaves) to avoid it from traveling to storm drains and causing backup.
- Oil, grease, paint, or any hazardous chemicals should never be placed in sanitary drain and/or washed into inlets or other sewer structures.
- Sump pumps, drain tile, downspouts, yard or driveway drains should never be piped to sanitary sewer lines.
  - A sump pump is a small pump installed in basements or low areas. When water reaches a certain depth in the sump, a float will rise to turn on the pump.
  - A drain tile is a pipe that is typically perforated and installed around the perimeter of the basement floor. Groundwater flows into the drain tile, which is connected to the sump pump.
  - A downspout is the vertical rectangular tube attach to the roof gutter allowing rainwater to flow down. **Make sure your downspouts are draining at least 6 feet from your foundation walls only onto your own property not into a storm drain or your neighbor.**
- Swales or detention areas should never be graded, filled in or built over since storm water flow can be affected.
  - Swales are graded low areas in yards to control and direct the flow of storm water to inlets, creeks, etc.
- Pools, buildings, decks, etc. should never be built over storm or sanitary sewers easements. If unavoidable, the homeowner should contact MSD and request an encroachment. Structures should not be built prior to MSD authorizing the encroachment.
- In the event of a basement flooding during a heavy rain or storm, STOP unnecessary water use. Any water you put into the drain will go directly to your basement.
- Many basement bathrooms are the basis of backflow due to not being properly connected to the sewer system. If you have problems with a bathroom in your lowest level that contact a licensed plumber for corrective action.

## What are backups and backflows, and what damage can they cause?

### Backups:

A **backup** occurs when waste or debris has obstructed a home's plumbing system or lateral, resulting in clogged or slow-moving drains or toilets. A backup occurs on the homeowner's property and the expense and responsibility for cleanup and repair lies with the homeowner.

Most backups can be cleared with drain cleaners or a plunger. If these methods fail, call a plumber. If the plumber finds out that the problem is not in your sewer line, call your local sewer or sanitation district, located in the phone book under "Government" listings for wastewater utility services.

A backup usually will not cause damage if you stop using the backed-up sink, tub or toilet until the system is cleared. Just turn off the water. While a backup can cause inconvenience, it is unlikely to cost a homeowner more than a plumber's call.

### Backflows:

A **backflow** is much less common than a backup. It happens when water or waste materials come up through a sink or bathtub drain or toilet when the home's plumbing system is not being used. This may mean that the city main is blocked and wastewater is backing up into your lateral line and home. If you experience a backflow, call your local sewer or sanitation district *immediately*. Even if the cause of the backflow damage lies with the city or sanitation district, the homeowner must act quickly to manage the cleanup.

Unlike a backup, a *backflow* can inflict serious damage, including flooding a room or an entire home. Sometimes, homeowners must move off the property during restoration. The cost of restoration after flooding and the hassle of dealing with insurance can be a major headache for homeowners.

The Public Works department jets the sewer system on a regular basis to maintain flow. Residents are responsible for the maintenance and proper operation of the sanitary or storm sewer service line (lateral) from their building to the village main trunk lines. We recommend that your service lines be rodded every five years. Call the Building Department at 708-345-0199 to make sure anyone you have working on your home is registered with the Village.

### Frequently asked questions about BPDs

Q: How can I find out if I have a cleanout or a backflow prevention device (BPD)?

A: Look for a lid -- a round or square plate labeled "sewer" -- near the property, street or sidewalk in front of your home. In some cases, a cleanout may be located in the yard near the home or in the backyard, if the sewer main runs behind the house.

Open the lid and you will see the top of the pipe leading to the lateral. This pipe is sealed by a cap that screws in place. A backup prevention device is a cap for the lateral with a spring-loaded top that pops up to allow water and materials to escape. This is why they are often called "pop-up devices."

Q: How can I get a backflow prevention device (BPD)?

A: Contact your public works department for advice and assistance, and to learn what device you should use in your community. Contact one of the licensed plumbing contractors in your area for information about a professional assessment and installation of a BPD, if needed.