

## Tips to protect your property..

What can I do to prevent back-ups?

### DONT

- Put diapers or sanitary napkins in the toilet.
- Dispose of grease down the kitchen drain
- Plant trees near sewer lines.
- Connect any drains or sump pumps to the sewer system.

### DO

- Install a plumbers test plug (available at hardware stores) at the lowest floor drain in your home.
- Hire a plumber to install a backflow valve on the lowest drain line. Regularly inspect and maintain the valve.
- Modify the plumbing line so that water is pumped to an upper level drain, eliminating the drains at the lower level.

### AND JUST IN CASE..

Locate and keep accessible the sewer cleanout in your front yard. If you do not have a cleanout, have one installed by a plumber. The cleanout is the property owner's responsibility.

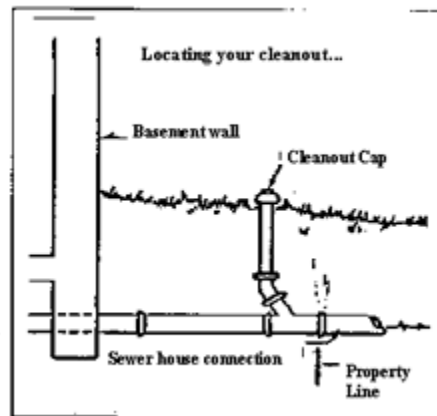
Check your homeowner's insurance policy. If you are not covered for backups, call your agent for information on cost and coverage options.

If you experience a back up, save all receipts related to any repair, cleaning or damages.

Do you know where your cleanout is?

This is the first question you will hear from our emergency service personnel if you ever have a sewer line blockage.

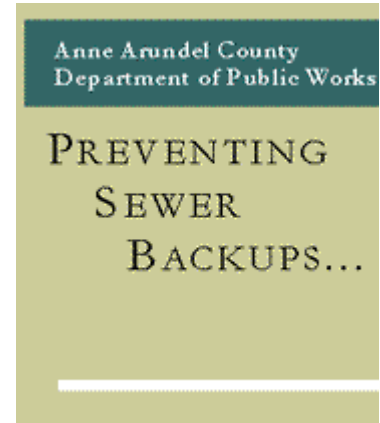
The cleanout is a pipe located near the property line that rises from your sewer line to about 4" above ground level and is capped.



Quite frequently, the cleanout becomes buried or hidden over the years and is forgotten. In some cases, older homes may never have had a cleanout installed by the plumber.

As a property owner, you are responsible for your cleanout. If the cleanout is buried, a registered plumber should be able to locate and raise it for you. If it is hidden, you will need to make it easy for our crew to locate.

When your cleanout is accessible, the Department of Public Works can correct any problem that may be disrupting your service on the county side of the line. Remember, if you experience a sewer line blockage, call us first at 410-222-8400. This could save you the unnecessary expense of a plumber.



### A Homeowner's Guide

*It will probably never happen at your house, but in case it does, it's important to have the facts in advance.*



## **What is a Sewage Back-up?**

The backup of sewage through the drains in your home or business is an unpleasant prospect. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to protect your property.

### **An easy lesson in basic plumbing**

Wastewater flows through small lines on your property to the larger, county lines in the street. From there, the sewage travels by gravity or pressure to a water reclamation facility. The stream is constant, with peaks in the morning and evening. Each day millions of gallons of wastewater safely reaches the county's seven facilities to be reclaimed and returned to the environment.

Unfortunately, a blockage in the sewer line can interfere with this normally quite, out-of-sight process.

A blockage in the private or county line causes a back-up through floor drains and toilets at the lowest point in your home or business. The overflow will continue until the blockage is removed or until sewage is no longer entering the line.

The Department of Public Works combines educational efforts with regular maintenance and investigative practices to prevent blockages. Customer information in the bills, public presentations, and school programs help our customers understand what can safely be disposed of down the drain. The inflow/infiltration section identifies problems, schedules repairs, and manages rehabilitation programs on over 240 pump stations and 1,100 miles of pipes.

If an Overflow Occurs...

Call our Emergency Services Division at 410.222.8400

If the sewer cleanout is accessible, an emergency crew will be able to determine if the blockage is in the customer's line or in the county line. If the blockage is in the county line, the crew will be able to break up the blockage, ending the backup.

If there is no cleanout or if the cleanout cannot be located, you will need to call a plumber to assist you.

Discontinue inside water use.

What Causes a Sewage Back-Up?

Anything which should not be in a sewer line has the potential to cause a blockage. For example:

Kitchen grease, disposable diapers and sanitary napkins can accumulate and cause a blockage.

Tree roots seeking moisture can grow through cracks in the lines, causing a blockage.

Vandals have stopped up lines by putting bricks, wood, oil filters, bed springs and even Christmas trees in man holes.

Illegal hookups allow excess water into the lines. Outside stairwell drains, sump pumps, roof leaders, and drain gutters should never be connected to the sewer system.

A sewer system is designed to carry a predetermined amount of sewage. Rain water not only overloads the system, but also raises the cost of the treatment process.