

## We all play a part in preventing sewage backups and it all starts right in your kitchen . . .

There is one simple step you can take to prevent backups. Avoid putting fats, oils or grease down your garbage disposal, toilet or any other household drain. This is one of the major causes of sewer backups. Not only can grease cause a backup, but also it can damage your plumbing.



## Wastewater Management Mission

To safely collect, treat, and monitor wastewater in compliance with all regulatory requirements, using state-of-the-art technology in the most effective manner. We work to improve the environment and enhance the quality of life in Fairfax County.

County of Fairfax  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS &  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Wastewater Collection Division  
6000 Freds Oak Road  
Burke, VA 22015  
24-hour Trouble Response Center  
703-323-1211 • TTY 711  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/wastewater](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/wastewater)

To request this information in an alternate format,  
call the Wastewater Collection Division.



# PREVENTING SEWAGE BACKUPS

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS &  
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Wastewater Management Program



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## Important Answers to Your Questions from Fairfax County's Wastewater Management Program

**Q** How could a sewage backup affect me?

**A** Sewer backups result from a blockage in the county's sanitary sewer line or the private sewer line that connects your home to the county system. If a blockage occurs, wastewater may enter your home through floor drains, showers or toilets in the basement.

**Q** What causes sewage backups?

**A** Accumulation of fats, oil and grease and root intrusion in both private and public sewer lines are major reasons for backups. Also, flushing items down the toilet that are too large for sewer lines to handle – such as toys and sanitary napkins – can cause backups. Another cause of blockages within the county's system is vandalism. Leaves, sticks, rocks, bricks, clothing, toys and trash have been found in sanitary sewer manholes.

**Q** What can I do to help?

**A** Call the **Wastewater Collection Division (703-323-1211, TTY 711)** immediately if you notice any vandalism of sewer lines or manholes. This way, the debris can be removed before it causes a backup.

Avoid putting cooking oils and grease down your garbage disposal or any household drain. Not only could it accumulate in county lines, but also it could build up in your own lines, eventually requiring the services of a plumber.

Do not flush disposable diapers or sanitary napkins down the toilet even if the labels indicate that you can do so. Besides stopping your sewer lines, these items could damage your plumbing system.

**Q** What should I do if sewage begins to back up into my home?

**A** Call the Wastewater Collection Division's **24-hour Trouble Response Center at 703-323-1211, TTY 711**. Our staff will inspect the county's sewer line. If the problem is in the county's sewer line, the county will take corrective action.

A quick check with nearby neighbors will help you determine if the blockage is widespread or limited to just your home.

**Q** What does the county do to prevent sewage backups?

**A** Fairfax County's Wastewater Collection Division is responsible for operating and maintaining more than 3,300 miles of sanitary sewer, 65 pumping stations, and 59 flow meters. Our staff regularly clean the county's sewer lines to remove blockages caused by tree roots and greases – the two major causes of sewer backups.

**Q** Who is responsible if the blockage is located in a customer's service line?

**A** Property owners are responsible for maintaining the private sewer line that extends from their property to the county sewer system, including the connection to the sewer. Therefore, property owners are responsible for any damages resulting from blockages in the private sewer line.

**Q** Who is responsible if the blockage occurs in a county sewer system?

**A** If the blockage occurs in a county sewer line, the Wastewater Collection Division will take corrective action. You may be reimbursed for any damage to private property, except in the case of vandalism to the county sanitary sewer system. Fairfax County's **Risk Management Division (703-324-3040, TTY 711)** handles all claims for reimbursement for damaged property.

**Q** Will my insurance cover any damage resulting from sewage backups?

**A** In the majority of cases, a special rider is needed to your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy to cover damages related to sewage backups or water damage. This optional coverage is available from your insurance provider. However, you must usually request it, as it is not automatically included in most policies.

### Who should I call to report a sewage backup?

Emergency crews from the county are on call **24 hours a day** to assist you. In an emergency such as a wastewater line backup contact the Wastewater Collection Division:

Emergency	703-323-1211
TTY	711
Non-Emergency	703-250-2003
Fax	703-250-7632