

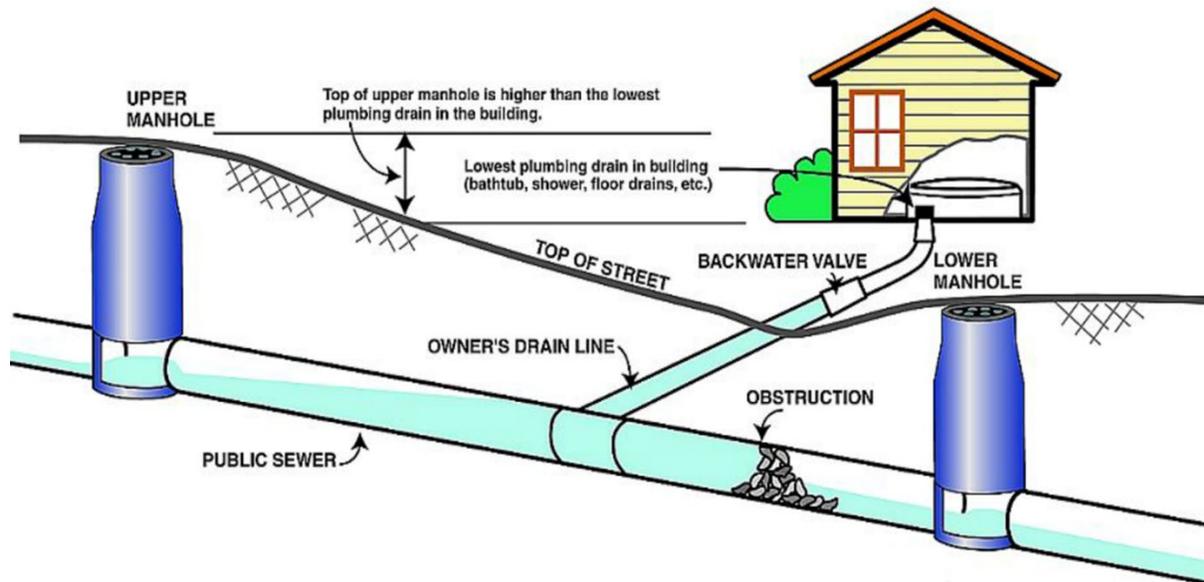


CITY OF HARRISONBURG PUBLIC UTILITIES

A MESSAGE TO OUR SEWER CUSTOMERS RESPONSIBILITIES IN PARTNERSHIP

What is a "Sewer Backup"

A **public sewer backup** occurs when the city pipe is restricted or overloaded, and the flow of sewer water from the public pipes is rerouted into the building's lowest plumbing fixture.



A **private sewer backup** occurs when the building private drain line is restricted, and the flow of sewer water from the building cannot exit.

What do I need to know about a “Sewer Backup”?

Claims for damage to buildings caused by sewer-backups probably lead to more misunderstandings and hard feelings than any other kind of single claim. *You should know:*

- 1: *if your private plumbing system complies with section 715 of the Virginia Plumbing Code, you should not incur a public sewer backup.*

715.1 Sewage backflow. Where plumbing fixtures are installed on a floor with a finished floor elevation below the elevation of the manhole cover of the next upstream manhole in the public sewer, such fixtures shall be protected by a backwater valve installed in the building drain, or horizontal branch serving such fixtures. Plumbing fixtures installed on a floor with a finished floor elevation above the elevation of the manhole cover of the next upstream manhole in the public sewer shall not discharge through a backwater valve.

- 2: *if a public sewer backup does occur, the city will remove the blockage. If a private sewer backup occurs, the city cannot work in the private system but will recommend that you contact a plumber.*
- 3: *the city will not allow plumbers into the public system and will not participate in any private contracted plumber response, so contact us first to make sure the problem is not of public origin.*
- 3: *the city is not obligated for any damage caused by a public sewer backup; we ask you to read this information carefully and take precautionary action as possible.*

What if a sewer backup does occur?

- 1: Discontinue the use of water in your building just in case it is a private blockage.
- 2: Do not try to determine if it is public or private, call us first. We are ready to respond 24/7/365. Our first responders follow established protocol and will leave you a written documentation of their actions and findings.
- 3: If sewer backup causes damage inside or around the building, you may immediately be put into a situation to make decisions that are necessary to protect health, safety, or welfare. HPU will not be a part of this decision. You can, however, contact us to pursue an insurance claim for a review of possible negligence from our utility. HPU will guide you through the process until a claims representative is assigned to the case. The homeowner should not expect the insurance representative to provide immediate relief for the important decisions in protecting previously referenced values.

Why does something that occurs in the public system fall to the responsibility of the building owner?

Virginia courts have ruled that the utility provider cannot be liable for what they cannot control; the following are uncontrollable conditions within our public sanitary sewer:

- We adopt ordinances that set forth the materials that can and cannot be placed into the sewers, but noncompliance among our customers is the leading cause of sewer backups.
- With 200 miles of underground pipes, we cannot be real time in addressing every defect that has the potential to enhance a sewer backup.
- We have limited to reasonable control over the amount of rainwater and runoff that enters private sewers and into the public sewers, but maintaining sewer reliability in extreme storm conditions is not feasible. We target the ten-year storm frequency as our benchmark.

What effort do we undertake to prevent sewer backups from happening?

We cannot fully guarantee a reliable sewer system without interruptions (sewer backups). We do embrace industry best practices and defined level of service (LOS) to establish our business model with our customers.

1: On a ten-year schedule we:

- inspect every pipe with CCTV inspection.
- preventive flush every pipe.
- smoke test every pipe.

2: We monitor performance during rainfalls events for pipes which backup during events which are less than the ten-year storm.

3: We continually monitor pipes for frequency of failures and then upgrade or replace the worst of these pipes through our annual capital improvement program; our annual reinvestment approaches \$1M every year.

Helpful Hints for the Private Sector Partnership

- 1: Keep our number handy and call us first on **(540) 434-9959**.
- 2: Know and abide by what materials can be placed into the sanitary sewer.
- 3: Research to know and comply with the plumbing code.
- 4: Maintain your private plumbing system for pipe tightness and proper venting.
- 5: Add a sewer backup insurance rider to your homeowner's insurance