



Sewer line backups can be expensive to fix, so we all need to do our part to prevent them. Homeowners are responsible for the maintenance and repair of the service line — the portion of the pipe that extends from the home into the street, alley, easement or right-of-way — into the city's main sewer line, as well as any street and sidewalk repairs that result. Aurora Water is responsible for maintaining and repairing the main line.

If your community has a homeowners' association, the portion of the line for which you were responsible could be slightly different. Check with your HOA for more information.



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AURORA WATER

Homeowner's Guide to Sewer Lines



At Aurora Water, we are dedicated to providing ongoing maintenance and repair to the city's sewer line system, but backups do occur from time to time. Here are answers to some of the most common questions:

What goes into the sewer line?

Whenever you turn on your faucet, do the laundry or flush the toilet, the water flows from your service line — the part of the pipe that extends from your house into the street, alley, easement or right-of-way — into the city's main sanitary sewer line. The city is responsible for maintaining and repairing the main line. Homeowners are responsible for repairing and maintaining their service line. If your community has a homeowners' association, the portion of the line for which you were responsible could be slightly different. Check with your HOA for more information.

How do I know if there is a sewer line problem?

If you suspect you have a sewer line backup, your line needs to be examined to determine the cause.

Call Aurora Water at 303-326-8645. Once field staff arrives, they will be able to tell you whether the backup is in the city's line or the portion of the line for which you are responsible. If the backup is in the city's main line, Aurora Water staff will clear the line. If the backup is in your service line, it typically can be handled through a host of private plumbing companies that can "snake" or clean the line. These companies typically are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

There are many reputable plumbing companies, but residents are encouraged to research a business before hiring them. The Better Business Bureau often lists companies that are bonded, licensed and insured. Residents can also ask the company for referrals, or residents can get a recommendation from family members or neighbors.

In rare instances, a plumber might tell you there is significant damage to your line or that your line needs to be replaced. If you chose to verify the accuracy of this assessment, you can ask the company to put a remote camera in your line and provide a video for you to review. As in any situation in which repairs could be expensive, you might consider having the videotape reviewed by one of our wastewater professionals. It's one of the many services we provide for free. Call us at 303-326-8645 and set up an appointment.

While most homeowners' insurance policies will cover damage to the interior of the home from a back-up or line collapse, they do not reimburse for the cost of repair of the line itself. Umbrella and line insurance policies are available from private providers, but like any financial decision, those choices need to be researched carefully. Significant repairs can be expensive. For those who qualify, low-income assistance is available for certain emergency repairs through Aurora's Neighborhood Services.

What is a cleanout?

A cleanout is an access point in your service line that allows a plumber to clear out obstructions in the line. It can be located in a variety of places, and not every home has one. If there is no cleanout, a plumber can still access the line, sometimes by removing a toilet.

If I smell sewer gas odor, does it mean something is wrong?

If you smell an odor or suspect a problem, call us.

We'll come out and take a look.

Why do sewer line backups occur?

One of the most common causes is tree roots that grow into the line. Trees won't bother an intact line, but any crack or separation will attract the roots to the moisture. Once they're in the line, they will continue to grow — and continue to create the possibility of a serious backup. Homes built prior to 1980 are the highest risk for root intrusion, a problem which can be minimized by snaking and cleaning the line regularly.

In some cases, however, sewer line backups are caused when people put things down the drain or in the toilet that, over time, can cause serious clogs. Here are some things you can do to prevent that:

- Do not put grease, dairy products or food scraps down the drain. Your garbage disposal doesn't break it down enough, and it can contribute to clogged lines. Instead, scrape food and grease off and put it in the trash.
- Do not flush hair, cigarette butts, aquarium gravel, kitty litter or cotton swabs down the toilet. The sewer lines are not designed to handle those things, and it can cause costly backups.
- Do not flush paper products other than toilet paper or tissue. Other paper products such as: baby wipes, paper towels and other sanitizing wipes, do not break down as quickly and can contribute to sewer problems.

We're available to answer questions any time you have them, so give us a call at 303-326-8645.

Aurora Water