



SEWER LATERAL INFORMATION GUIDE

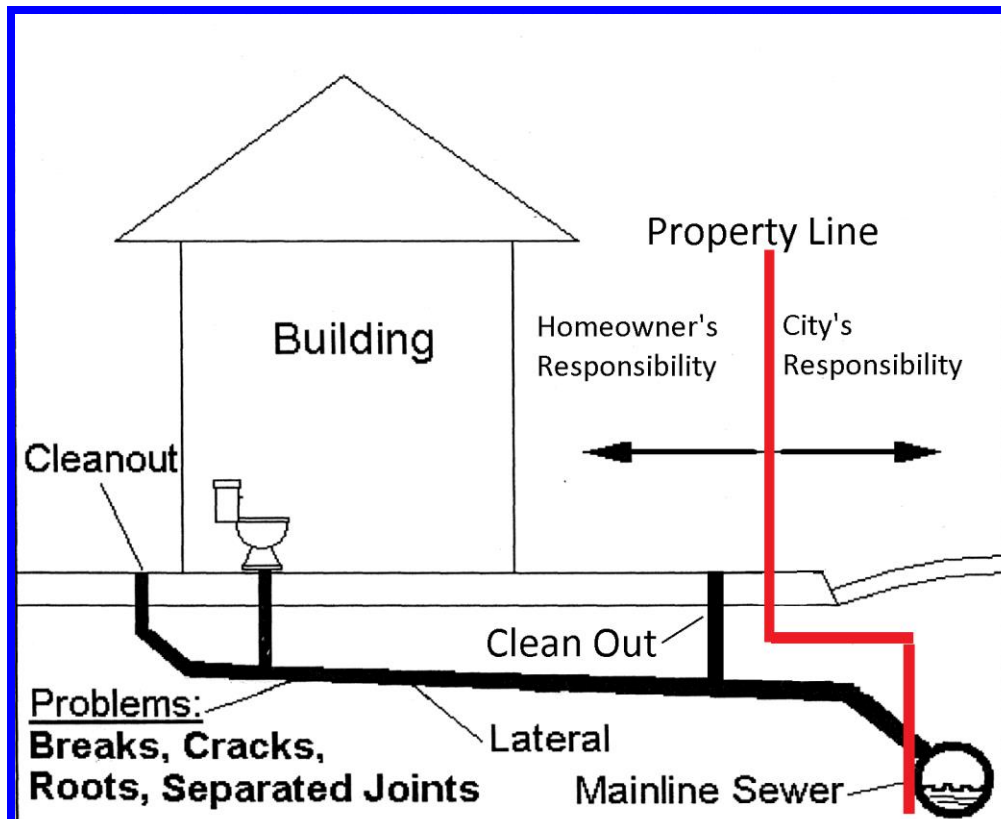
Definition, Ownership & Responsibility, Maintenance

What is a sanitary sewer?

A sanitary sewer is a system of pipes normally located in the street or in a public easement that are solely designed to transport sewage to a treatment plant. The City of Brisbane maintains these sanitary sewer pipes, also called mainline sewers, within the two districts operated by the City.

What is a sewer lateral?

The sewer line that carries wastewater from the sanitary fixtures and floor drains inside your home or business to the City's sewer mains is called a sewer lateral. The property owner owns and is responsible for maintaining the sewer lateral from the property structure into the City's sewer main. In some locations within central Brisbane there are "joint" private sewer laterals used by two or more residences; and in certain cases these laterals use private easements to traverse properties that are not connected to or served by the joint lateral. The properties that are served by the joint sewer own the line and are responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the lateral.



What causes sewer backups?

Occasionally the mainline sewer or the sewer lateral becomes blocked and the sewage is unable to flow; the blockage causes the sewage flow to “backup” or “overflow” to the first upstream outlet, which is most commonly a City manhole, but sometimes may be a low elevation fixture (such as a bathtub drain) in a private address. The most common causes of backups include:

- A buildup of grease, debris or foreign objects in the laterals or mains.
- Partial or complete blockage caused by tree roots.
- The collapse of old deteriorated sewer pipes.
- Excess water entering the sewer system from inflow of rainwater during severe wet weather conditions or from illegal drain connections to the sewer system.

What if my sewer backs up or I see a suspected sewer overflow in the street?

Call the City of Brisbane Public Works Department as soon as you begin to experience a backup or observe an overflow from a sewer manhole into the street. You can reach the Public Works Department at these numbers:

(415) 508-2130 [normal work hours]

(415) 467-1212 (24 hours)

Public Works crews will first check the City’s sewer main to verify that the pipe is open and sewage is flowing. If the blockage is found to be between the house and the Mainline Sewer, and/or if the blockage is caused by severe conditions which may necessitate replacement of the lateral, it is the responsibility of the property owner to call a licensed plumber or drain cleaning service to correct the problem.

Please note that the City is required by law to report any sanitary sewer overflows which may reach the storm drain system and ultimately the San Francisco Bay, and we are also required to take immediate action to mitigate the overflow. If a property owner does not take immediate action to repair their damaged sewer lateral, our only recourse is to turn off the potable water meter so that no source of water is available for use in flushing sewage. While this may seem harsh, we hope that residents understand the health risks imposed on others citizens and our natural environment if we were to allow the continued flow of raw sewage on City streets and into City storm drains.

The City is committed to minimizing sewer backups through regular maintenance, mainline replacement, and public education. An operations and maintenance team assisted by a civil engineer provides daily oversight of the City’s 4 sewage lift stations (which pump all of the City’s sewage to the City and County of San Francisco’s Southeast Water Pollution Control Plant for treatment), 21 miles of mainline sewers and 430 sewer manholes.

How can I prevent backups in my sewer lateral?

- X DON'T pour grease, fats and oils from cooking down the drain.
 - X DON'T use the sewer to dispose of food scraps.
 - X DON'T use the toilet as a wastebasket for garbage or chemicals. These items can kill "good" bacteria used in sewage treatment, cost much more to treat, and can enter the Bay.
 - X DON'T plant trees with shallow, spreading root systems near your sewer lateral. Tree roots seek water sources, such as from cracked sewer lines. Once the roots have penetrated the line through cracks, the roots can create a dense mat and trap materials.
 - X DON'T connect backyard drains, sump pumps and other drainage systems to the sanitary sewer line. It's illegal and can cause the capacity of the mainline to be exceeded during heavy rains.
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- ✓ DO collect grease in a container and dispose of it in the garbage.
 - ✓ DO place food scraps in the garbage for disposal with solid waste.
 - ✓ DO place a wastebasket in the bathroom to dispose of solid waste. (Disposable diapers and personal hygiene products do not belong in the sewer system.)
 - ✓ DO consult a plumber to investigate the condition of your sewer lateral if you have noticed sewage odors within the house, even if you have not experienced a backup or overflow.
 - ✓ DO consult a plumber to undo any illegal non-sewage plumbing connections to the sewer lateral.

Do I need a backflow prevention device on my sewer lateral?

If any plumbing fixtures such as shower/bathtub drains or toilets are at an elevation lower than the elevation of the next upstream City manhole cover, then the Uniform Plumbing Code requires the installation of a backflow prevention device on your sewer lateral to reduce the likelihood of sewage entering your home or business through these low-lying fixtures if there's a block in the lateral or main line. A licensed plumber can assist you in this determination.