

What You Need to Know About Backflow

Sewer lines can become blocked due to buildup or debris in the pipes that become trapped and create a blockage. When this occurs, wastewater is stopped by the blockage and flows backwards toward the first possible outlet. Most of the time that is a manhole. However, sometimes that outlet point is a fixture in a home or business.



When a sewage backup occurs, Public Works crews will respond only to check the City's sewer main to verify that the pipe is open and sewage is flowing. If the sewer main is found to be clear, it is the responsibility of the property owner to call a licensed plumber or drain cleaning service to correct the problem.



It is possible to protect your property from sewage backups with a plumbing fixture called a backwater valve. The

Uniform Plumbing Code requires installation of a backwater valve to protect plumbing fixtures that are below the elevation of the nearest upstream manhole.

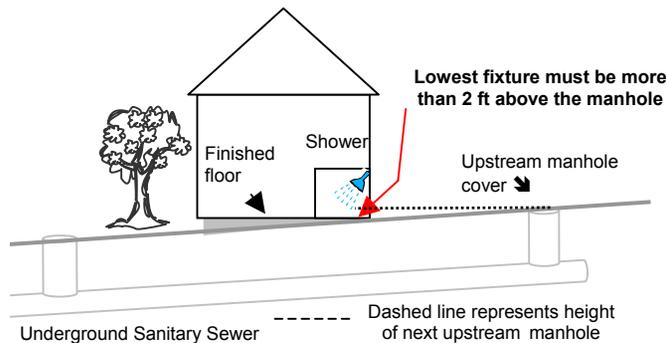
A backwater valve can be installed on your private sewer lateral to reduce the likelihood of wastewater entering your home or business through low-lying plumbing fixtures when there's a blockage in the public main.

The City of La Mesa is committed to minimizing sewer backups through regular maintenance, mainline replacement and public education.

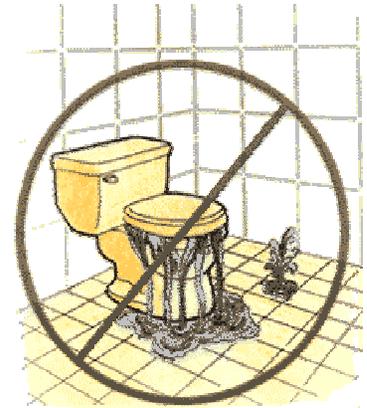
Recognizing that public improvements cannot solve all homeowner sewer problems, the City has responded by instituting the Backflow Prevention Program.

The Backflow Prevention Program assists qualifying property owners by paying 50 percent of the cost, up to \$1,500, for the installation of a backwater valve on their private sewer lateral.

It's important to note that funding for the program is limited to qualified residents and consideration for reimbursement is first-come, first-served. For more information, call 619-667-1338.



City of La Mesa BACKFLOW PREVENTION PROGRAM



A Guide for La Mesa Residents

Provided by the City of La Mesa
Department of Public Works

What is a sanitary sewer?

A sanitary sewer is a system of pipes normally located in the street that are solely designed to transport wastewater to the treatment plant. Sanitary sewer pipes in La Mesa, also called sewer mains, are owned by the City and maintained by the City of La Mesa Public Works Department.

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 main sewer line in the street is called a sewer lateral. The property owner is fully responsible for maintaining adequate sewage flow to and through the sewer lateral from the property structure to and into the City's sewer main.

What causes sewer back-ups?

Some of the most common causes of sewer back-ups are:

- ◆ Buildup of grease, debris or foreign objects in the sewer lateral or City main.
- ◆ Partial or complete blockage caused by tree root intrusion into sewer pipes.
- ◆ Sewer line collapse caused by old and deteriorated sewer pipes.
- ◆ Extraneous water entering the sewer system either from illegal pipe connections or inflow of rainwater during wet weather seasons.

How can backups be prevented?

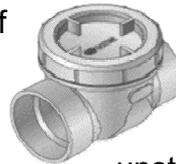
The best way to protect against backups is through regular cleaning and maintenance of sewer pipes.

Here are a few tips that will help:

- ◆ **Roots:** Don't plant trees or large shrubs near sewer lines. Roots grow toward breaks and cracks in search of a water source. If roots get inside the pipe, they form root balls that clog the line.
- ◆ **Grease:** Dispose of grease and fats with your trash – don't put them down the drain! Grease collects and hardens inside the pipes and forms a plug.
- ◆ **Illegal plumbing connections:** Don't connect backyard drains, sump pumps and other flood control systems to the sanitary sewer. It's illegal and debris and silt will clog your line. Consult a plumber to undo any illegal connections.

Do I need a backwater valve?

If the elevations of drain, bathtub or instance, is less feet above the the next manhole cover of the public sewer, then you need a sewer backwater valve.



Will the backwater valve totally prevent a sewer backup?

No, a backup may not be totally prevented; however, a properly maintained backwater valve can significantly help reduce the damages caused by a sewer backup.

What if my sewer backs up?



Call the Public Works Department as soon as you notice slow-running drains and City crews will come out. If we find a blocked sewer main, we will open it. If the problem is found to be in the sewer lateral, it is the responsibility of the property owner to call a licensed plumber to correct the problem.

The Public Works Department is on duty 24-hours a day, seven days a week. **If you see or suspect a sewer overflow, call the Public Works Department at 619-667-1450** during working hours. During non-working hours, call the Police Department (non-emergency) at 619-667-1400 and a maintenance crew will be dispatched to your address.

Call 619-667-1338 to ask about installing a sewer backwater valve at your La Mesa home or business.