

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - SEWER RULES

ADOPTED MAY 28, 1992

RESOLUTION NO. 92-152

AMENDED RESOLUTIONS:

NO. 94-14, 00-57, 02-272, 03-206, 06-307,
08-137, **09-188**

RULE 23 - BASEMENT FLOODING PROCEDURES

Section 1. Sewage usually moves from the pipes inside your home or business through your sewer lateral to the public sanitary sewer mains to a Wastewater Treatment Plant for treatment, however when this course reverses for any reason, it can cause major headaches. The following information can assist you in the event of a backup.

WHO TO CALL:

The first thing you should do if you experience a sewage backup is call the Department of Environmental Services during normal business hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday – Friday) at 419.433.7303. After hours, weekends and holidays or if you fail to get a response at the department’s number, call the County’s after hours phone center at 419.625.2373 who will contact the on-call person for response. During sewer backup situations, please do not rely on voice or email messages as these are generally only reviewed during normal business hours.

DETERMINING THE PROBLEM:

Upon receipt of a backup call, division personnel will respond to check the public sanitary sewer to determine whether the problem is in the main or in your sewer lateral. If the problem is caused by a blockage in the main, County crews will address the problem. If the problem is in your sewer lateral, you will be advised to hire a plumber to inspect the line and remove any obstructions.

INSURANCE:

The majority of backups that occur are the result of problems in the customer’s sanitary lateral. In these instances, the customer is responsible for all costs resulting from the problem. It should be noted that many insurance policies do not cover sewer backups unless special coverage is purchased. The County strongly encourages that all sewer customers review their policy to determine whether they have coverage. If a sewer backup could impact finished living space, your business or cause other hardships, you may wish to consider purchasing the additional coverage.

The County conducts routine cleaning and inspection of the sanitary sewer system to assure its proper operation. However, backups in the County sanitary sewer may occur as a result of situations beyond our control such as the introduction of inappropriate materials into the main such as grease poured down the drain, diapers flushed down the toilet or sticks pushed into manholes; heavy rains; or tree roots entering the line through laterals or joints. The County is not held responsible for damage caused by a backup unless negligence by the County can be proven, and no sovereign immunity provisions that apply.

If you experience damage that you feel is a direct result of the County’s negligence, contact Erie County’s Lost Control Coordinator who can be reached at 419.627.7581 during business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday.

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - SEWER RULES

ADOPTED MAY 28, 1992

RESOLUTION NO. 92-152

AMENDED RESOLUTIONS:

NO. 94-14, 00-57, 02-272, 03-206, 06-307,
08-137, **09-188**

Section 1. Continued

CLEAN UP:

The County does not assist with cleanup of private property resulting from problems in the sewer lateral. If the cleanup is major, there are companies that can assist. If you have sewer backup coverage, you should coordinate any contracted cleaning with your insurance company.

PREVENTION:

Preventive measures can help reduce the potential for a backup or minimize their impact. The following are some suggested guidelines:

1. **Freeze the Grease, Save the Drain:** One of the biggest culprits of lateral blockages is grease and oil used or resulting from cooking. Rather than pouring the grease or oil down the drain, put it in a disposable container (such as an empty milk carton or food can). To make it easier to dispose, put it in the freezer until it is set and then throw away in the trash can.
2. **Know Where Your Cleanout Is:** Current code requires that every new sewer lateral installation include an external sanitary sewer cleanout. This portal to your lateral makes it easier to inspect and clean the line. Do not cover it with dirt or other landscaping materials, so when you need it, you find it quickly. Check the cap routinely to assure that it is in place and in one piece; as a broken or missing top can allow the entrance of rainwater increasing your risk of a backup during heavy storm events. If you have an older home without a cleanout, you may wish to consider installing one.
3. **Choose and Plant Trees Carefully:** Don't plant trees or shrubs above or near your sewer lateral to prevent their roots from entering the line through cracks and joints. Avoid placing species that have more aggressive root systems such as birch, willow, poplar, ash, and elm in the part of the yard where your sewer is located.
4. **Maintain Your Line:** Before buying a house, you should make sure that a sewer line inspection is conducted. For the best results, the contract conducting the inspection should use a lateral inspection camera and provide you with a copy of the results. Do not overlook any problem in the sewer lines. Slow draining sewers may be the first indication of a bigger problem.

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - SEWER RULES

ADOPTED MAY 28, 1992

RESOLUTION NO. 92-152

AMENDED RESOLUTIONS:

NO. 94-14, 00-57, 02-272, 03-206, 06-307,
08-137, 09-188

Section 1. Continued

PREVENTION (Continued)

5. **Remove Storm Drain Connections:** If you have storm drain connections that convey water from roofs, foundations, sump pumps, yards or other areas into your sewer lateral, you should remove them. These are actually illegal connections and subject your home to a higher potential for backup during rain events. These types of fixtures should be connected to the storm sewer system. For more information on how to connect to the storm sewer system, contact the City, Village or Township you live in.
6. **Consider Installation of a Backflow Valve (also known as Check Valve):** If you have experienced frequent backups, you may wish to consider the installation of a backflow valve. This valve is a fixture put on a sewer lateral, and sometimes a drain line, the basement of your home or building foundation to prevent sewer backups. A properly installed backflow valve works on a one-way system; sewage can go out, but not back in. Once installed, these become part of your private system and should be maintained in accordance to the manufacturer/installer's instructions. However, when the public sewer is backed up and the backflow valve is closed sewage cannot go out.
7. **Consider Installation of a Basement Sewage Grinder Pump:** Disconnect all of your basement sewage from your service lateral and pipe them to a grinder pump that will pump the sewage into the service lateral. There will then be no lower level drains that can back up.
8. **Review Your Insurance:** Review your insurance policy to determine whether you have coverage for sewer backups. Most general policies do not include this as a benefit. If yours does not, you may wish to consult with your agent as to whether it might be one benefit to add this coverage.

Section 2. Sewer customers that have experienced basement flooding as a result of public sanitary sewer backup; who have reported said backup to the County and who has no illegal stormwater connections to the public sanitary sewer shall be eligible for the following incentive:

Upon the customer installing sewer service improvements to prevent the customers building/home against future sewer backups from the public sanitary sewer to an elevation equal to or higher than the closest downstream public sanitary sewer manhole cover, the County will provide as an incentive a \$500.00 sewer credit to the monthly sewer bill for said customer.

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - SEWER RULES

ADOPTED MAY 28, 1992

RESOLUTION NO. 92-152

AMENDED RESOLUTIONS:

NO. 94-14, 00-57, 02-272, 03-206, 06-307,
08-137, 09-188

Section 2. Continued

Said improvement can consist of installing a check valve with access for maintenance on the main sanitary sewer service, a grinder pump system for lower level sewage to eliminate all lower level gravity drains connections, removal of lower level gravity sewer connections, etc. Said improvements will need to be inspected by the County's Sanitary Engineer or his agents before the sewer credit is awarded. The customer shall use a registered contractor as described in Rule 24 to perform these improvements. It shall be the sewer customer's responsibility (not the County's) to own and maintain the sewer improvements. No connection/tap permit will be required for this improvement.