

Common Definitions

● **Clean-Out**

The building clean-out is a vertical pipe with a cap that provides access to a private service lateral. This allows blockages to be removed.

● **P-Trap**

A U-shaped section of pipe that holds water to prevent odorous gases from rising up through a toilet, sink or floor drain into a home or business.

● **Private Service Lateral**

Privately owned sewer line from a building that connects to the City's sanitary sewer main.

● **Public Sanitary Sewer**

City maintained line where private service laterals connect to transport wastewater to a treatment plant.

● **Right-of-Way**

The area on, below or above a public roadway, street, public sidewalk, alley, waterway or utility easement in which the municipality has an interest.

● **Sanitary Sewer**

Underground piping that conveys wastewater from houses, commercial and industrial buildings to a wastewater treatment plant for treatment.

● **Wye – (pronounced “ Y ”)**

A plumbing device that connects the private service lateral to the City's sanitary sewer main. (Homeowner's Responsibility)

● **Vent Stack – (Plumbing Vent)**

Vertical pipe, running through the building's roof, which is connected to a drain line to vent gas and odors. When open and clear, this allows wastewater to flow smoothly to the service lateral.

Frequently Asked Questions

● **What is a sanitary sewer blockage?**

An incident when an obstruction in a private or public line slows or stops the flow of wastewater through the line.

● **Why did the sewer back-up?**

A blockage in the private lateral line or City main didn't allow wastewater to continue to a wastewater treatment plant.

● **What is a sanitary sewer overflow?**

A condition in which untreated wastewater is released from a sanitary sewer into the environment before reaching a wastewater treatment plant.

● **I smell rotten eggs, but there is no sewer back-up?**

Water in the “P-Trap” may have evaporated and is allowing sewer gases into the building. By adding water to the “P-Trap”, the smell should go away.

● **How do I prevent my private sewer line from clogging?**

- Only allowing water down the drain
- Let cooking grease cool and throw it in the trash
- Placing food waste in the trash
- Prevent items that can cause blockages from entering the drain

● **Items that cause blockages:**

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| ▪ Grease | ▪ Food Waste |
| ▪ Paper Towels | ▪ Napkins |
| ▪ “Flushable Wipes” | ▪ Bed mats |
| ▪ Diapers | ▪ Tree Roots |
| ▪ Any other items that are not poop, pee and toilet paper | |



Water Pollution Control

Sanitary Sewer Blockage Guide

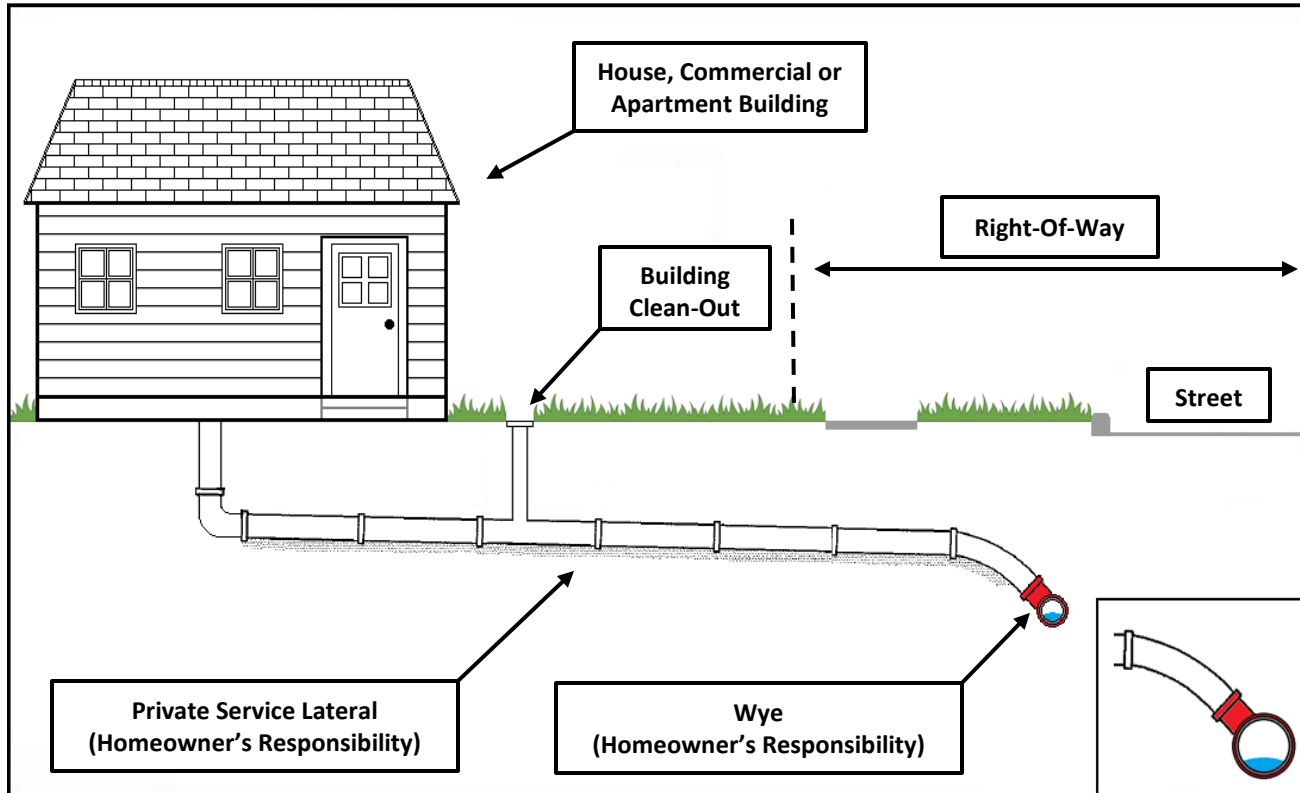
Water Pollution Control maintains approximately 760 miles of public sanitary sewer lines through a regularly scheduled maintenance program. It is critical to keep sanitary sewer mains free of tree roots or other debris to ensure there are no backups or sanitary sewer overflows. Although lines are cleaned routinely, the possibility of blockages still exist.

The following information is to provide residents with information regarding sanitary sewer blockages, their causes and how they can be prevented.

[WPC Responds to Sanitary Sewer Blockage](#)

1. Crew will make contact with caller to gather more information.
2. Crew will inspect manholes to determine or isolate the potential blockage.
3. If a “potential blockage” is located, the crew will send appropriate cleaning equipment through the City's sanitary sewer line to ensure it is free of obstructions and open.
4. Crew will follow-up with caller.
5. If the blockage is determined to be located in the private sewer lateral, the owner will need to contact a plumber to remedy the situation.

Private Service Lateral Side Profile



What is Wastewater?

Wastewater is “used” water that comes from ordinary living processes. After being used, it goes down the drain and enters the private service lateral.

Wastewater moves through underground pipes, where it eventually reaches a wastewater treatment plant. Here it is treated to remove pollutants before being discharged into the Kansas River.

When the wrong materials are introduced into the sewer system, the flow of the wastewater can get blocked. This results in wastewater backing up through the drains in homes, apartments or buildings. This can also lead to a sanitary sewer overflow from a manhole, which could flow into local streams.

• Sources of Wastewater

- Brushing your teeth
- Washing your hands
- Using the dishwasher
- Using garbage disposal
- Flushing the toilet
- Taking a bath/shower
- Washing clothes
- Etc.

Having Access to Sanitary Sewer Manholes

Manholes must be accessible for City personnel to perform necessary maintenance. You can help City personnel by not placing landscape items or fencing on or around manhole lids as they may be located in the backyard.

If City personnel needs to access a manhole located in the backyard, they will knock on the door to inform the homeowner they are there. If they are unable to access the manhole, they will leave a door hanger with a contact number for future scheduling.

[For Service or Questions](#)

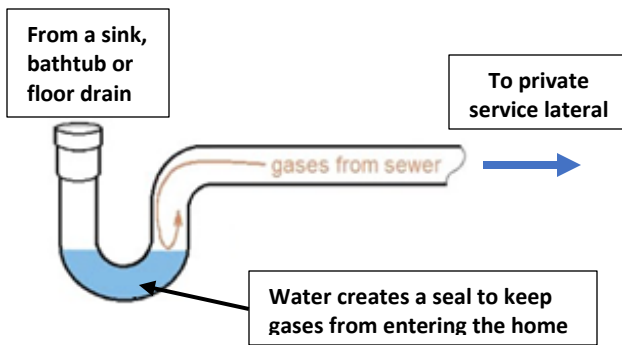
Customer Service Center - (785)-368-3111

[For Additional Information](#)

www.topeka.org/utilities/sewer-backups

Keeping Sewer Odors Out of the Building

Since sanitary sewer systems produce offensive smells, every floor drain, toilet, sink, tub and shower that is directly connected must be plumbed so that these gases can't get into the home. The most common method is a P-Trap.



Minimizing Tree Roots

Trees absorb nutrients and water through their roots. A tree's root system can be extensive and even spread out further than the branches. As roots grow, they are searching for needed nutrients and water.

Over time, they could come into contact with the private service lateral and slowly work their way into the pipe. Hair-line cracks, holes and/or pipe joints are access points for them to enter.

Once roots enter the pipe, they will begin to fill the pipe, which could lead to a sewer back-up.

The first step is to contact a professional if you think tree roots may be causing an issue.