

SEWER LINE CLEAN OUT

A *sewer clean out* is a capped pipe which provides access to a sewer line, allowing people to clean out blockages in the sewer. In many regions, sewer clean outs can be found along the lateral sewer line, the sewer line which connects a home's plumbing to the municipal plumbing. Lateral clogs and the sewer clean out are the responsibility of the property owner. Larger sewer clean outs are also located at intervals along the municipal sewer line, so that water and sewer employees can clear blockages in the part of the sewer system which is the municipal utility districts responsibility.

Most home owners are concerned with the clean outs on their properties. Sewer clean outs are often situated near each home on a property, and at the property line, providing several points of access. It is a good idea to know where each one is located, and to keep the surrounding area clear so that the clean outs can be accessed in a hurry. When a blockage does arise, quick access can be critical to prevent overflow. The pipe can usually be opened by hand or with a wrench and cleared with the use of a plumbing [snake](#) or augur, a tool which consists of a long coiled cable attached to a large head. The head is shoved into the pipe and the coil is pushed, forcing the head through the blockage to clear it and promoting a free flow of materials through the sewer line. It is also possible to investigate a blockage with the use of a plumbing camera.

Homeowners should also alert renters to the location of the sewer clean out, so that the renters can reach it quickly in an emergency. If a homeowner does not know where the sewer clean out is, a municipal utility District employee or licensed [plumber](#) may be able to locate it.

DEALING WITH SEWER BACKUPS

Sewage backing up through the drains in your home or business is a very unpleasant situation, however, there are steps you can take to prevent it from happening to you.

For starters, if an overflow occurs, you should discontinue your inside water use until the problem is corrected. If you continue to use water and the sewer line is already blocked, the water has nowhere to go but back up through your drains and toilets and into your home or business.

Any number of causes could be responsible for the sewer backup. Some of the causes include:

- Kitchen grease, disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, and even the accumulation of some types of cleaning materials and detergents can lead to a blockage.
- Tree roots are a big problem, especially with older sewer lines, as they will grow through cracks in the line to seek moisture.
- Illegal hookups to the sewer system will allow excess water into the lines. Items such as rain gutters and sump pumps should never be hooked into the sewer system. *The municipal utility district sewer system is only designed to accommodate a certain amount of wastewater, and open cleanouts allowing rainwater to enter the collection system particularly during periods of heavy rain, would overload the system and cause problems, this is unacceptable. This will increase operating cost for the utility district and tax payers.*

Do you have a cleanout?

A cleanout is a pipe that rises to ground level from the sewer line and is normally capped. Many times, cleanouts become hidden or buried over the years, and are not readily accessible. In the case of an older home, a cleanout may not have been installed when it was built. If your

property doesn't have a cleanout, it would probably be a good idea to contact a licensed plumber to install one for you.

If you have a sewer cleanout available, the municipal utility district will be able to tell whether the blockage is on your side or the municipal utility district side. If the blockage is in a municipal utility district sewer line, our personnel will be able to remove the blockage and resolve the sewer back-up. If the blockage is in your sewer line, you will have to contact a plumber to clear the blockage for you.

Hopefully, you will never have a problem with a sewer backup. However, if you do, you can minimize any damage to your property by taking the following preventative measures:

DON'T

- Put diapers or sanitary napkins in the toilet.
- Dispose of kitchen grease down the sink drain.
- Plant trees near sewer lines.

DO

- Make sure you have a sewer cleanout and that it is readily accessible.
- Make sure your clean out has a cap or plug.

1. Storm sewer

- Collects storm water from street drains and house gutters only.
- Leads eventually to the Bay

2. Sanitary sewer

- Carries wastewater only (sewage)
- Connected to your home's plumbing (toilets, sinks, tubs, laundry) *French drains and gutters are not to be connected to a homeowner's sewer line under no circumstances.*
- Leads to a sewage treatment plant

If you should need assistance locating your clean out please call Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 148 at 281-895-8547. There are no guarantees that we will be able to locate the clean out, homeowner may have to contact a plumber to locate the clean out if the Municipal Utility District can't locate the clean out.

Example of a homeowner's sewer line clean out.



Typical sewer cleanout with properly installed plug.

