

Preventing Sanitary Sewer Back-ups

Property damage by sanitary sewer back-ups can be costly. Fortunately, there are some precautions that can be taken to minimize the possibility of a sanitary sewer back-up into your home.

Back-ups usually occur when materials or products are introduced into the sewer system that should be disposed of in another manner. Please follow the product manufacturer's suggestions for disposal of those items. Your assistance will help to prevent back-ups that may affect you and your neighbors.

If you are experiencing a problem with your sewer service, please contact the Public Works Department during regular business hours at (847) 490 - 6800 or the Police non-emergency number at (847) 882 -1818 after-hours and on weekends and holidays. A service representative is available 24 hours/day and will be dispatched to check the Village's main line sewer system. If the main line is clear, you will be advised to contact a plumber to check your private service line. A "Private Service Line" refers to the sewer line extending from the building to the Village main line system including the point of connection to the Village main line.

Materials that can cause blockages within an individual sanitary service line or the Village's main line sewer system include: Cooking Grease; Garbage Disposal By-Products; Feminine Hygiene Products; Disposable Diapers; and Other Paper & Plastic Product.

Hiring a Sanitary Sewer Contractor

The vast majority of contractors licensed to do business in the Village of Hoffman Estates are reputable. However, homeowners must always be cautious before signing a contract or paying for any contracted repairs. This is especially true when contemplating maintenance or repairs that have seldom been contracted for in the past. In the case of private sanitary sewer line maintenance and repairs, recent incidents that have been brought to our attention indicate to us that homeowners did not fully understand the responsibilities of the contractor and Village requirements. Prior to entering into a contract for work that requires excavation, make sure of the following:

- Before any work can take place, a Permit must be obtained from the Village. (Permit applications can be picked-up at the Village Hall at 1900 Hassell Rd., 847-882-9100)
- In accordance with State of Illinois Regulations, underground utility locations must be performed prior to any digging or excavation work. Utility locations may be obtained through J.U.L.I.E. at 1-800-892-0123. There is no cost to the homeowner for this service. A representative from each utility will be sent out to check the excavation site.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who do I contact for information on contractors?

Contact the Department of Public Works at (847) 490-6800 and request a list of contractors that are licensed to work in the Village. The Department can also answer questions you may have about Village requirements.

2. What do I need to know when asking for contractor services?

Understand the exact nature of work and the scope of services that needs to be performed. Avoid making quick decisions, if pressured to do so by the contractor.

3. How many quotations should be obtained?

It is best to have a minimum of three quotations.

4. What should the contractor services include?

Be sure that quotes state the materials, services and warranty period. The quotations should be in writing and signed by the contractor.

5. How do I know if the firm is reputable?

Make sure to ask the contractor for references and then contact the references provided. Ask those contacted if they are satisfied with contractor's work including site restoration and if they would ever use the contractor again.

6. How do I check if there have been any complaints against the contractor?

Before entering into a contract, contact the Better Business Bureau (BBB) in order to determine if the contractor has had complaints lodged against them. The BBB telephone number is 312-832-0500, or, their web address is www.chicago.bbb.org.

7. Do I need a Contract?

Obtain a written contract signed by the contractor that specifies all the work.

8. Does the work need to be inspected by the Village?

Whenever maintenance requires excavation, an inspection is required by the Department of Public Works. *The inspection must take place prior to any pipe being installed and prior to any backfill materials being installed.* Make sure that the contractor is aware of this requirement and insure that the contractor shows you proof of Village inspections.

9. What records should I keep?

Records should include all contract paperwork, insurance and warranty information, a journal of calls and conversations with the contractor, a journal of activity including payments, Village permit's and Village inspection reports.

10. When should the final payment be made?

Before making your last or a final payment, ensure that all work meets contract specifications, you receive a material and workmanship warranty from the contractor, and you have proof of the Village's inspection approval of the work.

11. Who do I contact if I have a complaint against the contractor?

In the event that you have a complaint to lodge against an underground contractor, report it to the BBB as well as to the Village.

Things to Remember

- For excavations obtain a permit from the Village and contact J.U.L.I.E. for excavation approval
- Request a list of licensed contractors from Public Works
- Get a minimum of three (3) quotes
- Understand the nature of the work/services
- Ask for references and check them out
- Make sure you have a signed written contract that spells out exactly what the work entails
- Keep all records
- Request proof of Village Inspections