



FACT SHEET: First Steps During a Sewage Back-up Into Your Home

1. Call DPW– Customer Service (864-7428) to report the back up. Your call will be logged in our tracking system. The City will dispatch crews to check the public sewer line. Although the City is not usually responsible for the back-up into private property, the City will provide emergency pumping of basement on a first come first serve basis. However, the City does not provide clean-up services. Our goal is to respond to all calls within 24 hours.
2. Because of the health and safety concern, the affected areas should be cleaned as soon as possible. You may want to consider hiring a professional clean up company to assist you in cleaning up the area where the back up occurred. Check the yellow pages under “Fire and Water Damage Restoration”. The City cannot recommend contractors. Additionally, please consult our Fact Sheet “Cleaning up after floods/sewer back ups or the Vermont Department of Health’s guidance at http://healthvermont.gov/news/2011/060111_flood_contaminated_water.aspx
3. Contact your insurance agent to report the back up and to determine whether this back up may be covered under your homeowners policy. If it is not covered, you may want to consider asking about sewage back-up insurance coverage for the future.
4. Submit a claim to the City (863-4501 during regular business hours). The City’s insurance agent will evaluate the claim and determine whether your claim will be covered. In most cases, sewer back-ups due to extreme precipitation events are not covered by the City’s insurance, but you should take this step to determine if you are eligible for coverage.
5. Because many sewage backups are related to extreme storm events that impact our combined sewer system, it is both required by City Ordinance and imperative for your own protection that you ensure that basement plumbing fixtures (and any fixtures subject to backflow) are compliant with City Code (Chapter 25) and the International Plumbing Code. Such fixtures must be protected by properly installed, permitted, and maintained backwater protection systems. (see Backwater Protection Fact Sheet and Code Citation sheet)
 - Contact a licensed plumber to evaluate your plumbing system and to install a backwater valve if none exists. A City plumbing permit must be obtained and an inspection by a City Trades Inspector performed as part of this process. The City cannot recommend plumbers.
 - If you have a backwater valve, contact a licensed plumber to evaluate whether your backwater valve is compliant with our code, working properly and whether you may be a candidate for a different type of backwater protection (see Sewage Back-Ups FAQs). A City plumbing permit is required for any changes to your plumbing system.
 - When the City Trades Inspector inspects the installation of the backwater valve the Inspector may identify that there are fixtures or uses in the basement that have not been permitted or do not meet our ordinance/codes. It is the Inspector’s job to evaluate this when performing an inspection. Therefore, please be prepared to work with our Trades Inspectors, and in some cases Zoning, to rectify any non-compliance while you are addressing the backwater valve issue.
6. Sewage back-ups into a private dwelling are not usually the City’s responsibility. There are a range of options to protect your home (see Sewage Back-Up FAQs).