

FLOODING & SEWER BACK-UP

GENERAL INFORMATION

In light of the rain event of June 26, 2008, the City wants to reach out to you with information regarding yard and basement flooding.

Where do I report storm or sanitary sewer problems in Pickerington? Please call the City's Service Department at (614) 833-2292. Be advised that the City of Pickerington does not maintain your building sewer, also known as lateral sewer, which is defined as the sewer that connects your building to the public main sewer. While the problem may turn out to be within the private property line for which the owner is responsible, it is best to call the city first to check the public system.

In addition, if you experienced flooding, please complete a flooding questionnaire that can be obtained at any City office or at the City's website at:

www.pickerington.net/flooding.questionnaire

All information from these questionnaires is important if repairs are required to the City's sewer system and to plan future capital improvement projects to remedy flooding problems.

The following is a list of common causes of basement flooding:

1. A leak in your home's foundation, basement walls, or basement windows or door;
2. Poor lot drainage;
3. Check grading to ensure it slopes away from buildings;
4. Failure of the foundation drain system and/or sump pump;
5. Overflowing gutters and leaking/plugged downspouts;
6. A blocked connection between your home and the main sewer in the street (sewer lateral);
7. A back-up of wastewater in the sewer system; and/or,
8. Inflow/infiltration (I/I) – storm or ground water which enters the sanitary sewer system through leaks in pipes and manholes;

What to do if your basement floods?

1. Call the City of Pickerington Service Staff at 833-2292. City staff will inspect the problem, assess the flooding and attempt to determine the source(s) of flooding. If the problem lies with the City's infrastructure, the City will schedule the necessary repair or include it in the budget. If the flooding is a result of a blocked sewer lateral or drain pipe, leaking foundation walls or poor lot drainage, or a failure of the sump pump, the property owner is responsible for repairs and any subsequent damage caused by flooding. Regardless of who is at fault, City staff will advise you of a possible course of action to take.
2. Call your insurance company as soon as possible and report property damage caused by the flooding. Take pictures and save receipts from emergency repair work or cleanups.
3. Because dealing with a flooded area can be dangerous, extra safety precautions should be taken. When in doubt, contact the Fairfield County Department of Health. Please follow these safety tips:
 - Because electrocution is always a danger in a flooded basement, wait until the water recedes before you begin cleanup. If you decide to walk in the water, the electricity must be shut off at the main box.
 - Since flood water may be contaminated with sewage, wear rubber boots and gloves to minimize skin contact. Do not smoke, eat or touch your face while in a flooded area. If you receive an open wound while working in a flooded area, seek medical attention immediately.
 - Do not allow children or pets near the flooded area.
 - Remember that flooded areas will be slippery, even after the water recedes.
 - If a gas odor is present, do not touch any electrical fixtures, telephones or switches – any spark may ignite the gas. Leave immediately, leaving the doors open to ventilate, and call the Fire Department and the gas company from a safe place. Do not light a match or use any open flame on your way out of the house.
 - If the furnace or other appliances became wet, have them inspected by a qualified service technician before using them. Turning on wet electrical equipment could produce shock, endangering life and may burn out equipment. Once your furnace is cleared for use, replace the filter with a new, dry filter.
 - Dispose of all food that became wet - do not eat it.
 - Discard any medicines and personal products that came into contact with the flood water.

What can I do to prevent flooding in my yard and basement?

- Check your downspouts to make sure they are not connected to the sanitary sewer. This is illegal. They should drain either to the street or yard, ideally six (6) feet from your basement walls.
- Take a good look at your property's drainage system. Make sure your sump pump and drainage system around the home are working properly. Keep your gutters free of debris.

- Check the grading around your home to make sure water is directed away from, and not toward, the structure. Fill in any low spots in your yard that may allow water to pond.
- To prevent sewer blockages, never pour grease, paint or other thick liquids into your sinks or drains. Avoid flushing items not suitable for sanitary sewer disposal, such as paper towels, diaper wipes, contraceptive and feminine products.
- Verify with your insurance company if you have flood and/or sewer backup coverage, especially if your basement is finished. Most homeowner insurance policies will not cover a sewer backup without "sewer backup coverage". The City will not cover damages unless it was proven that the City was negligent in maintaining its system. The City recommends you consider obtaining a rider that would cover such damage if it would occur.
- Install a Backwater Prevention Valve: A backwater valve can prevent or greatly reduce the possibility of a sewer backup. A backwater valve is a fixture installed into a sewer line, and sometimes into a drain line, in the basement of your building to prevent sewer backflows. A properly installed and maintained backwater valve works on a one-way system, sewage can go out, but cannot come back in. They require frequent inspection and maintenance to ensure proper performance and to eliminate the risk that the valve may cause a build up of pressure that may cause structural damage to floors or walls. However, be cautioned that in sewer overflow conditions, the plug may cause a build-up of pressure that may cause structural damage to the floor or walls. Property owners are responsible for the installation and maintenance of backwater valves. The cost to install one is dependent upon the type of plumbing in your home and the difficulty of installation. A qualified plumber can assist you in determining your needs.
- If a sewer backup occurs, proper cleanup procedures must be followed for safety reasons. Never enter a flooded basement - the risk of electrocution is present. Wait for the water to recede. Please see our cleanup instructions below.

What is the City of Pickerington doing to prevent wet weather problems?

- Sanitary sewer I/I (inflow and infiltration) sewer studies have been conducted in Downtown Pickerington and other main sewers and will continue in other areas.
- Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs) are normally identified as a result of the sewer studies. Other solutions may include rehabilitating older sewers through trenchless technology such as cured-in-place-pipe, or sewer replacement or adding additional/larger sewers to increase capacity.
- The City is currently expanding its wastewater treatment plant to enable the treatment of additional flow.
- Stormwater best management practices such as stormwater detention ponds and stream corridor protection zones are required for all developments to minimize the impacts of development on our streams.

Clean-up Instructions:

The City of Pickerington does not assist with the cleanup of private property. Please check the Yellow Pages phone book under "Home and Garden > Construction, Repair, and Improvement > Fire and Water Damage Restoration" or under "Cleaning Services".

To-do it-yourself, after the water recedes, follow these clean-up instructions:

- Move items out of the flooded area as soon as possible.
- Allow wet items to air-dry as quickly as possible to prevent rot and mildew.
- Open doors and windows. If your furnace or air conditioner is safe to use, turn it on to assist in drying. Also use fans and dehumidifiers if possible.
- Remove all toxic chemicals such as pesticides from the flooded area to prevent further contamination and the mixing of chemicals.
- Wash down concrete or brick walls, floors, faucets etc. that have been under water, first with clean water, then soapy warm water. Sweep water and sediment down the drain or to the sump pump.
- Disinfect all areas and equipment that came into floodwater contact with a solution of 8 tablespoons of liquid chlorine bleach to a gallon of water. Let everything air dry.
- To clean washable fabric items, brush off dirt and residue before washing, according to the instruction label, in hot or warm water with bleach if possible.
- Foam rubber mattresses and pillows can be washed, disinfected and air-dried in the sun. If in doubt that an item can be cleaned properly, it is best to discard it.
- Flush and disinfect floor and sump pump drains using undiluted chlorine bleach.
- If you basement is finished with drywall and it became wet, it is best to discard it and replace that portion to avoid the growth of mold. Some wood paneling may be salvageable if you can clean and dry it properly without it becoming warped.
- NEVER MIX BLEACH WITH AMMONIA – THE FUMES PRODUCED TOGETHER ARE TOXIC.
- If you have homeowners or renters' insurance coverage for flooding or sewer backups, don't forget to notify your insurance company.

Lastly, whenever you come across a road that is flooded, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DRIVE THROUGH IT! Motorists cannot always rely on visual indicators to determine the condition of a roadway under water. Standing water could be deeper than it appears, or there could be a sink hole or other hidden hazards. It only takes six inches of running water to sweep you off your feet or make you lose control of your car or truck, and just two feet of rushing water can carry away a pickup or SUV.

If you have any additional questions or comments, please contact the Service Department at 833-2292 or the Building and Engineering Departments at 833-2221.