

Sanitary Sewer Overflow Notice FAQ

Questions Answered in This FAQ

- What does this notice mean for customers?
- This is a sewer problem. Is it related to my drinking water service?
- What causes sanitary sewer overflows?
- What can be done to prevent overflows?

What does a Sanitary Sewer Overflow Notice mean for customers?

A Sanitary Sewer Overflow Notice means a discharge from the sanitary sewer flowed into the environment. Citizens can protect themselves from this public health concern by avoiding the area near the overflow until it has been cleaned up.

While this notice is a public health and environmental advisory, it should not otherwise affect customers' water or sewer service.

This is a sewer problem. Is it related to my drinking water service?

No. This is not a boil water advisory. For more information on boil water advisories, see www.columbiasc.net/drinking-water/advisories.

This should not affect your drinking water service or the drinking water system in the area.

What causes sanitary sewer overflows?

Sanitary sewer overflows occur when more water enters a pipe than it can carry or when there is a clog preventing a pipe from draining correctly.

Some of the more common causes of sanitary sewer overflows are:

- **Heavy or very long rainfalls:** When an area has experience a lot of rain, the rain can seep into the sewer system. This causes an increase in the amount of water in the pipes and can cause the system to become overfull. When there is more water in the pipes than they can carry, the water will overflow.
- **Cooking grease clogs:** Fats, oils and grease poured down sinks will collect on the inside of sewer pipes and are a common cause of sewer clogs. Detergent and hot water can make the problem worse because they give the impression

that the grease has been "dissolved" when they really just push the problem down the pipe. Eventually, the grease will come out of suspension and collect in sewer lines.

- **Root clogs:** Trees and shrubs planted near sewer lines can cause clogs when their roots find small cracks in the pipes and grow through them. These roots can form dense root balls that completely block sewer lines.
- **Other trash and debris clogs:** Our sewer system is designed to carry used water, human body waste, and toilet paper. Other items like personal wipes (no matter what the package says) or trash can clog pipes and get caught in sewer pumps, leading to costly cleaning and repair expenses for the City.

What can be done to prevent overflows?

Repairing sewer pipes is a long-term process, and the City's Capital Improvement Program includes projects that identify and repair problem pipes.

Additionally, citizens can do their part to protect our sewer lines. They can:

- **Trash the Grease:** Never pour grease down the kitchen sink. Instead, pour leftover grease into a jar or can, let it cool, and toss it in the trash. Food particles can also clog sewer lines. Always scrape your plates and dishes into the trash or compost bin.
- **Trash the Wipes:** Our sewer system is designed to carry used water, human body waste, and toilet paper. It is not designed to handle personal wipes (no matter what the package says) or other trash items. Instead, personal wipes should be thrown in the trash.
- **Mind the sewer easement:** If you have a sewer easement in your yard, do not plant any trees or shrubs near it. Consider moving any shrubs that may already be near the sewer easement.
- **Remember: anything that clogs the City's pipes can clog your home's pipes.** By following the tips above, you can avoid problems with your personal sewer line and potentially avoid disgusting backups and expensive plumbing repairs.

Want more information?

Visit www.columbiasc.net/wastewater, e-mail info@CleanWater2020.com or call (803) 545-3300.