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The Benefits of Closed-Circuit Videoing Lateral Sewer Lines



Many times when a resident reports a sewer back-up they assume it is from the main connection. Utility Authorities and municipal sewer departments may respond to the sewer back-up by replacing the house connection from the main line to a little behind the curb.

While this action will most likely resolve the current sewer back-up, the question is, will this prevent it from happening again and address the real cause?

Closed-Circuit Video (CCV) of lateral sewer lines can identify the cause of the back-up and responsibility by determining if the back-up was from the main or lateral lines. Throughout the years if there have been multiple sewer back-up claims at the same residence and the lateral lines were videoed after the first back-up, the cause and responsibility could have been properly determined, thus possibly eliminating additional claims in the future.

An additional benefit of using the CCV during the preliminary investigation of a back-up is that the utility authority or municipal sewer departments can identify the most affordable repair solution possible.

The photo shown above was obtained from a municipality that responded to a sewer back-up at a residential home for the second time in two years. It was the contention of the resident that grease accumulation was the result of the main back-up. After the second repair, the municipal sewer department videoed the lateral line and proved that the grease accumulation was the result of the actions of the resident. The six inch house lateral sewer line was over 90% blocked by grease accumulation. The photo taken by CCV was provided to the resident and the municipal sewer departments informed them they would not be responsible for any future blockages caused by the resident.

It is important to note that the authority / municipality will need to acquire written permission from the homeowner to video the house lateral line from the inside the home to the street (curb). The release should include wording to the effect “For work performed on behalf of homeowner” and a disclaimer in the event something happens to the authority / municipal equipment while on the private property. The release form should be reviewed by legal counsel before being used by the authority or municipal sewer department.

This bulletin is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.



Public Service Announcement to Prevent Sewer Backups in the Home

The majority of sewer back-ups into a home are caused from improper disposal of waste into toilets and drains. The following items should NOT be discarded into toilets or drains: fats, oils, or grease from cooking, solid food particles, diapers, baby wipes, feminine hygiene products, and paper towels. These items do not break down in the sewer pipes and will cause back-ups into homes. The improper disposal of these items will create serious maintenance and health issues for the homeowner and also for the public wastewater collection and treatment systems.

When fats, oils, or grease are poured down a sink, these products will solidify once they have cooled down in the sewer pipes and will cause a blockage. If you think running hot water in the sink will help disperse this matter, you're wrong! Hot water may get this matter out of your sink drain, but as soon as the water cools down, these products will solidify in your sewer pipes. This build-up will restrict flow and accumulate in the pipes, where in combination with other materials that shouldn't be flushed will cause sewerage to back up into a home and often cause blockages in the main sewer system located in the street.

Residents should be aware that some of these products are labeled as "Flushable", are only assumed to be. A vast majority of these products do not break down in the same manner as toilet paper and create problems in households and the collection system, pumping stations, and wastewater treatment facilities.
