



# WINTHROPHARBORPUBLICWORKS

STREETS ♦ WATER ♦ SEWER ♦ FORESTRY ♦ FLEET ♦ BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

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## DEALING WITH SEWER BACK UPS

### Contact Us First

If you have a back-up in your sanitary sewer system, contact the Village of Winthrop Harbor Department of Public Works by calling 847-872-5275, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:30pm For after-hours emergencies contact the Winthrop Harbor Police Department non-emergency line 847-872-2131.

A Public Works crew will respond to check the Village's main sewer lines. If a line is found to be blocked, the crew will purge the line to get it open. If your back-up does not recede after the Village line is found to be open or after it is purged, you should call a professional plumber to have your home's service line cleared. The Village cannot recommend plumbers for this service, but many can be found in the local telephone directory yellow pages.

During periods of heavy rainfall it may be possible for main sewer lines to become surcharged. This means there is so much inflow into the sewer system it will not take any more into the line. If this happens, there is no maintenance function that can help at that time. You must wait for the heavy inflow to subside so the lines will once again handle a normal flow.

After Village crews have inspected the main sewer lines, we will inform the address reporting the back-up as to our findings by telephone or knocking on the residence door.

Please be sure to leave an accurate address and telephone number when reporting a backup.

## **Proceed With Cleanup Promptly**

Use caution when conducting the cleanup. Use rubber gloves and rubber boots that can be cleaned or discarded after use. You will be dealing with sewage and there are health considerations to take into account. You may want to consider having a professional cleaning service do the work for you.

Use caution when using any electrical appliance in a wet environment. **DO NOT** attempt to shut off electricity if the breaker box is wet or near any water. **DO NOT** use outlets that may have become wet or are near any water.

Remove standing water. Heavy duty wet vacuums work well for this and may be obtained from local rental stores to assist in clean-up.

Air out the room. Drying wet areas is helped by encouraging air circulation by opening windows and using fans.

Clean carpets. Damage can be minimized by thorough carpet cleaning. Professional services can be contracted or cleaning equipment can be rented.

NOTE: Insurance liability restrictions prevent Village crews from assisting in the clean-up of private residences and furnishings.

## **Insurance Claims**

The Village cannot be held responsible when improper items are put in the sewer or when heavy rainfalls surcharge the lines. We cannot control these events. You may want to check with your private insurance carrier to determine if you have coverage through your homeowners insurance. Most homeowners insurance does not automatically include this coverage.

## **Preventing Future Backups**

Sewer blockages generally occur due to root infiltration or improper items entering the sewer line. The Village conducts an aggressive program for removing root infiltration in the Village's sewer system.

Sanitary sewers are designed to handle human waste. The Village is not responsible for foreign items entering the system. Examples of items that can cause sewer back-ups if they enter the system include:

- Grease
- Clothing
- Diapers
- Children's Toys
- Feminine Napkins
- Other Man-made Items

## Sewer Odors Inside Houses or Buildings

Sewer odor or gas is always present in the sewer system and cannot be eliminated. This is why there are provisions in the Uniform Plumbing Code to insure that vent pipes and traps are installed to the house plumbing systems to carry odors and gasses out through the roof vent and prevent it from coming back into the structure.

If you experience sewer gas odor, check all plumbing fixtures and drains to be certain all traps are full of water. Pour some water down floor drains or infrequently used tubs and showers to be certain traps are full.

Atmospheric conditions can have an effect on when you may get odor inside the house. When barometric pressure is falling or is very low, the air outside is heavier than air from the sewer system. This can act like a cap on the vent stack causing pressure to build up in the sewer system and any openings will discharge sewer odors from the system. This may also be apparent from manholes or drains outside your house during periods of low barometric pressure.

If odor problems continue, have a plumber check out the entire house system for drain system air leaks.

If you have questions or comments please call the Village of Winthrop Harbor Department of Public Works at 847-872-5275 or email at [publicworks@winthropharbor.com](mailto:publicworks@winthropharbor.com)

