

## SEWAGE BACKUP – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### What is a sewer backup?

Sanitary sewer backups are often caused by insufficient system capacity during heavy rains or a blockage in the system. This can include cracks due to tree roots or blockages from grease, hair, and other solid materials accumulating in the pipes.

### What are the immediate steps I should take when I find I have a sewage backup?

If you see sewage pooling in your home, immediately **call PWSA Dispatch at 412.255.2423**. Please note the following to the Dispatch representative:

1. Where the sewage backup is within the home.
2. If this is a recurring issue.
3. If the backup occurs when water is used inside of the building.
4. If the backup only occurs during a rain event.

### Are there serious health concerns that I should be aware of?

Sewage contains bacteria, viruses, and germs that can be harmful to your health and can contaminate the area in which the backup occurred. Accidental ingestion or contact with raw sewage can cause gastrointestinal illness, skin infections, or rashes. **[It is important to stay away from the contaminated area until professionals can come to assess the damage.]**

### Will my insurance cover the cost of repairs?

Homeowners insurance does not always cover the cleanup and repairs after a sewage backup event; this service may have to be purchased separately. Contact your insurance provider to ensure you are covered. PWSA is not financially responsible for the cleanup or repairs after a sewage backup. If the customer believes the backup was the fault of PWSA, the can contact the Authority at 412.255.2376 and file a claim.

### What does PWSA do to prevent this from happening?

PWSA does everything possible to prevent backups from happening in the system's main lines. The Authority is moving towards separated sewer systems, those having one pipe for sanitary sewer waste and one for stormwater, to help to minimize stress on the sewer system. Keeping catch basins unobstructed also allows for proper drainage during a rain event.

### How can I avoid sewage backups in the future?

Do not flush or dump solid materials or oil down the drain as this can cause blockage. Use a drain catch and throw food scraps in the trash. If you have a grease trap for a drain, clean it regularly.