

## **City of Warren Property Owners:**

### **How to Prevent Water and Sanitary Sewer Back-ups**

A water and sanitary sewer back-up can be a stressful and costly problem. Luckily, many water and sewer back-ups and overflows can be avoided through preventative maintenance. Property owners in the City of Warren are responsible for the maintenance of sanitary service lines and connections from their home or business to the main sewer line. The main sewer lines are usually located within the street's public right-of-way. In some areas, public sewer mains may be located within utility easements located along the rear of the property. The City is responsible for maintenance of flows in the main sewer line and routine maintenance and repairs of the sewer main pipes.

Here are a few things property owners can do to help make sure sanitary service lines remain unobstructed:

#### **Roots:**

Root intrusion into the sewer pipe may be a cause of sanitary sewer back-ups. Shrub and tree roots seeking moisture make their way into sewer pipe cracks. The roots may start out small, entering through a crack in the pipe, but as the tree or shrub continues to grow, so does the root. After time, this can cause the sewer line to become obstructed with roots and waste build-up resulting in a potential sewer back-up.

Chemical additives can be used to reduce/eliminate root build-up inside the sewer pipes. Several "root killing or root growth inhibiting" products can be found in home improvement stores.

If tree root problems persist in a sewer service line, the property owner should hire a plumber to cut them out yearly by rodding or snaking the sewer line. Plumbers charge approximately \$100 to \$200 to perform this service. Incurring this expense yearly may be more economical than spending \$2,000 to \$4,000 to replace an existing sewer service line with a new plastic pipe. If the property owner decides to replace the sewer service line, a minimum of three (3) price quotes should be obtained since prices often vary drastically. The City of Warren requires permits and inspection for replacing the sewer service lines within the limits of private property and within the limits of the public right-of-way or utility easements.

#### **Paper Products:**

Paper towels, diapers and feminine products cause a great deal of problems in residential sewer lines. Unlike bathroom tissues, these products do not deteriorate quickly. They can become lodged in portions of your sewer line, causing a sewer back-up. Rather than taking a chance, dispose of these paper products in the garbage.

#### **Grease:**

Avoid pouring cooking oil or other grease down the drain. Some people assume that washing grease down the drain with hot water is satisfactory. This grease may go down the drain, cool off, and solidify either in the drain or in the property owner's line. When this happens, the line constricts and eventually clogs. Instead, pour grease into a heat-resistant container, let it cool and dispose of it safely in the garbage.

#### **Downspouts:**

Homeowners are encouraged to install downspout extensions and position them in such a way as to direct the rain water away from house's foundation (and not onto the adjacent property). This helps to reduce water inflows into the footing drains located near the foundation footing.

#### **Homeowner's Insurance:**

Most homeowner policies do not cover sewer back-up events. Check with your homeowner's insurance provider to see if your policy covers such events. If they do and you are not covered, see if your insurance company will allow coverage to be added to your policy and at what cost. If they will not provide coverage for such damages and you wish to have sewer back-up damage protection, it may be necessary to shop around with other insurance companies.

#### **Property Owner's Sewer Responsibility Drawing (see reverse side)**

The drawing illustrates typical sewer connections to the City's sewer mains. The property owner is responsible for maintenance of the sewer lateral from the building to the City's sewer mains. The City is only responsible for maintenance of the sewer mains.

# PROPERTY OWNER SEWER RESPONSIBILITY

