

# Village of Hartland

## Sewer Backups Questions & Answers

Sewer backups rarely occur in the Village of Hartland, but they occasionally can happen. The Village of Hartland makes every effort to prevent such incidents through routine maintenance. The following information is offered to help property owners and residents understand why backups happen, how they can be prevented, and what steps citizens should take if a sewer backup affects their property. The following questions and answers may be helpful:

### What causes a sewer backup?

Sanitary sewer backups can be caused by a number of factors. They usually involve sewer pipe blockages in service laterals (lines between buildings and the main line), but they can occur in the main sewer lines. In residential or commercial plumbing systems, the main cause is accumulation of grease, tree roots, hair, cleaning wipes or solid materials, such as disposable diapers or feminine products that are too large for sewer pipes to handle. Such materials may cause major backups in Village lines as well as in residents' lateral lines. One possible cause of blockages within the Village's sewer system is someone placing leaves, sticks, rocks, bricks or trash down manholes. If you see any such activity, please call the Village of Hartland at [262-367-2714](tel:262-367-2714) as soon as possible after observing.

### What does the Village do to prevent this problem?

Every attempt is made to prevent backups in the public sewer system before they occur. Sewer lines are specially designed to prevent accumulation and stoppages.

In addition, we have maintenance crews that are devoted to inspecting and cleaning wastewater lines throughout the Village on a regular schedule.

### Will my insurance cover any damage to my home or property?

In the majority of cases, a special rider will need to be added to your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy to cover damages related to sewage backups or water damage. This optional coverage is usually not very expensive, but you must usually request that it be added to your policy. Check with your insurance agent about this policy provision.

As with the majority of municipalities in the country, the Village cannot assume financial responsibility for damages resulting from sewage backups, since most stoppages are related to conditions that are beyond the Village's control. That is why it is important that property owners confirm that they are adequately insured, particularly if areas of their home lie below ground level. Call your insurance agent today to have this coverage added to your policy.

Created By Michael Gerszewski  
Village of Hartland, Operations Supervisor

### How and where should I report a sewer backup?

Emergency crews are on call 24 hours a day to assist you. In an emergency such as a sewer backup, or if you observe any vandalism associated with the sewer manhole or sewer lines, please contact the Village DPW at the following numbers: [\(262\) 367-2714](tel:262-367-2714) between the hours of 7:30am and 4:00pm Monday through Friday or [\(262\) 446-5070](tel:262-446-5070) on nights, weekends or holidays.

**It's every ones  
responsibility  
to protect the  
sewer system.**

Village of Hartland  
210 Cottonwood Avenue  
Hartland, WI. 53029

Phone: 262-367-2714  
Fax: 262-367-2430  
E-mail:  
[info@villageofhartland.com](mailto:info@villageofhartland.com)

## Where does grease come from?

Grease is a byproduct of cooking meat or cooking with lard, oils, shortening, butter and margarine. When washed down the sink, grease sticks to the insides of sewer pipes (both on your property and under the street. Over time, it can build up and block the entire pipe.



## How could a sewer backup affect me?

If the backup occurs in a Village maintained line, the wastewater will normally overflow out of the lowest possible opening. In homes especially those with basements, or where the lowest level is even with the sewer lines, the overflowing wastewater may exit through the home's lower drains and toilets.

The proper way to dispose of grease is to store in a separate container and throw away in the trash.



## What should I do if sewage backs up into my home?

First, take action to protect people and valuable property.

Don't run any water down your drains until the blockage has been cleared.

Quickly close all drain openings with stoppers or plugs. Tub, sink, and floor drains may need additional weight to keep them sealed. A string mop can be used to help plug toilet openings.

Call the Village Department of Public Works (DPW) **immediately**. Phone numbers are (262) 367-2714 between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:00 pm Monday through Friday or (262) 446-5070 on nights, weekends or holidays.

## If I call the Village, what will they do about a sewer backup onto my property?

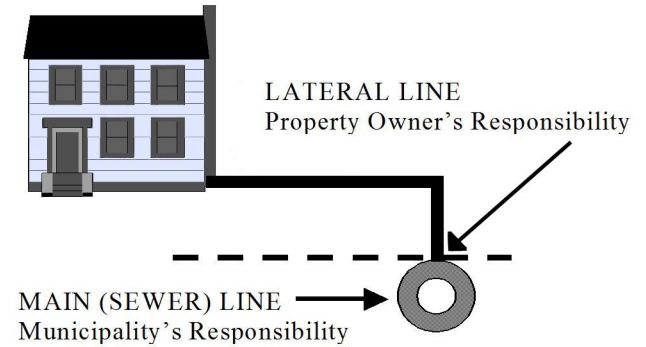
You will be asked questions about the backup timing, location, the property at risk, etc.

Village DPW personnel will check for blockages in the main line. If found, the blockage will be cleared by the DPW.

If the main line is not blocked, you will be advised to call a plumbing or sewer contractor to check your lateral line. Maintenance and repair of the lateral line is the owner's responsibility. (See diagram upper right.)

To minimize damage and negative health effects, you should arrange for cleanup of the property as soon as possible. There are qualified businesses that specialize in this type of cleanup.

If the sewer backup onto your property resulted from blockage in the main sewer line, Village DPW personnel may contact the Village Police department to document any damage that may exist.



## Is there anything I can do to prevent sewage backup into my home?

Avoid putting grease down your garbage disposal or household drain or using liquid fabric softeners in your washing machine. These can solidify, collect debris and accumulate in Village lines, or build up in your own system.

Never flush disposable diapers, feminine products, baby wipes, paper towels, clothing, and other bulky items down the toilet. They could stop up your drains and may damage your plumbing system.

If the lateral line in your older home has a jointed pipe system, consider whether the roots of large shrubs or trees near the line could invade and break pipes. It is a good idea to know the location of your lateral line(s). Property maps can often be acquired from the Village Hall.

If the lowest level of your home is below ground level, such as a basement floor drain, it may one day be affected by a backup. One way to prevent sewage backup through such below ground areas is to install a "back-flow valve" on the lowest drain(s). You can also use a plumber's test plug to close these drains when not in use.

For further information about preventive measures, contact a plumber or plumbing supply dealer.