

HEALTH & SAFETY TIPS

Raw sewage and flood waters contain bacteria, fecal matter, viruses, and other hazardous microorganisms that can cause illness. Touching or walking through contaminated areas can bring germs into uncontaminated areas of your home. Children and pets are especially vulnerable. Minimize your exposure by following these safety tips:

- Do not enter your basement if the water level has reached any electrical connection, extension cord or electrical outlet. Electrical shock hazards and gas leaks must be assessed and addressed prior to entering the affected area. When in doubt, turn off the power supply to the affected area. Turn off the gas to the furnace and hot water heater as well.
- Wear proper protective clothing and safety gear. That includes rubber gloves, rubber boots, safety goggles and a nose mask.
- If you are cut while working in contaminated water, contact your doctor.
- Wash your hands frequently. Always wash before and after bathroom use, before eating, and immediately after contact with contaminated water.
- Avoid skin contact with sewer water, especially cuts and sores.
- Disinfect all areas and equipment that come in contact with the contaminated water. A bleach solution of 4 to 8 tablespoons chlorine bleach to one gallon of water will remove odors and bacteria. Although an effective disinfectant, bleach may cause discoloration.
- Keep children and pets away from contaminated areas.
- Do not eat or drink anything exposed to sewer water.
- Keep contaminated items, water, and hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.

BUILDING BACKUP PREVENTION PROGRAM

For homeowners with a history of building backups as a result of MSD issues, MSD offers a special Sewer Separation Program. Through this program, MSD pays for modifications to a property's plumbing to protect against future backups, and provides ongoing maintenance and repair of installed devices.

These modifications might include:

Backflow device/check valve -- If a backflow device is installed in your yard to prevent sewage from backing up in your private line, MSD will clean and inspect it periodically to ensure it remains in proper working order.

Private pump station system -- If a private pump station is installed, a private contractor will conduct an annual inspection and maintenance check to ensure it remains in proper working order.

Emergency repair services -- MSD will provide emergency repair services for customers with a backflow device or private pump station we have installed. These customers are asked to contact MSD's Customer Care Center for emergency service, and a service crew will be dispatched to resolve the issue. Customers are responsible for a \$100 deductible every time a crew is dispatched to the property outside of ordinary maintenance inspections. The charge will be added to the customer's next bill. MSD covers all other costs for repairs we make.

Note: MSD will not pay for repairs that are the result of modifications or discharges of unacceptable waste materials made by the homeowner that affect a device's operation. MSD does not reimburse for services provided by private plumbers or those not initiated by MSD's Customer Care Center.

For more information, call: 314-768-6260

Brochure Available in Multiple Languages



Metropolitan St. Louis
Sewer District
2350 Market Street
St. Louis, MO 63103

DEALING WITH BUILDING BACKUPS AND BASEMENT FLOODS

How your basement gets cleaned is up to you. Whether you do it yourself or hire a company that specializes in flooded basement cleanups, be sure to document your damages and cleanup costs for possible reimbursement. MSD does not provide cleaning service after building backups and flooding.

If you choose to hire a cleaning company

- For private companies that can handle the clean up for you, check the Yellow Pages under "Fire and Water Damage Restoration." MSD is prohibited from making specific recommendations.

If you will be doing the clean up yourself

- Follow the safety precautions and clean up tips in this guide.



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PREVENTING BUILDING BACKUPS

Building backups are most likely to occur during heavy rainfall. Here are simple things you can do to help prevent them.

- Have the sewer line that connects your home to the sewer main inspected and cleaned regularly by a licensed plumbing contractor.
- Flush root eliminator products down your toilet to help prevent tree roots from growing in your sewer. These products are available at most hardware stores.
- Avoid flushing diapers, feminine hygiene products and materials other than toilet paper down your toilet.
- Properly dispose of leaves and grass clippings to prevent them from washing into storm sewers, causing blockages and possible flooding.
- Never dump oil, paint, grease, or any hazardous chemicals into a stormwater inlet, sanitary sewer drain, or other sewer structure.
- Never pipe a sump pump, downspout or driveway drain into a sanitary sewer line.
- Properly grade your yard away from your home.

GOT SEWER PROBLEMS?

Emergency Sewer Issues: 314-768-6260

**For non-emergency sewer issues:
CustomerSvc@stlmsd.com**

Please contact MSD if:

- Sewage backs up into your home through a floor drain.
- You smell sewage outside your home.
- A manhole cover is missing or out of place.
- A cave-in or ground settlement develops in your yard or street near a sanitary or storm sewer.
- The storm sewers along your street need to be cleaned or repaired.

When the issue is urgent, we will send a maintenance crew to your home, usually within a few hours. Urgent situations include raw sewage found inside or outside of the house, missing manhole covers, and flooded streets or yards.

During especially heavy rainfall, we may receive hundreds of phone calls and must prioritize our response according to the immediate threats to our community's health and safety.

Because of our limited resources, it may take from a few hours to a few days before a crew visits your home. We also follow up on reports of non-urgent cave-ins and settlements, typically within a few weeks.

HOW TO CLEAN UP AFTER A BUILDING BACK UP

You can significantly minimize the damage to your property and personal belongings by following these basic cleaning guidelines.

See [Health & Safety Tips For Additional Precautions](#).

Step 1: Assemble cleaning supplies.

- Rubber gloves, rubber boots
- Eye goggles, nose mask
- Trash bags
- Rags, paper towels
- Mop, pail, broom, hose
- Cleaning & disinfectant products
- Shop vacuum

Step 2: Remove furnishing and personal items from the affected area.

Raw sewage and flood waters contains illness-causing contaminants. Absorbent materials, such as carpets, upholstery and mattresses are at high risk for mold growth and usually cannot be saved. Hard, non-absorbent goods, including appliances, can sometimes be salvaged if they have not been submerged. But they can pose serious shock hazards if not completely dried. It is better to be safe than worry when choosing what to keep and what to discard.

Should always be thrown away

- Carpeting, padding, rugs, flooring
- Upholstered furniture, mattresses, pillows
- Toys, stuffed animals
- Medicine, medical supplies
- Cosmetics
- Paper products
- Food

May be salvageable

- Clothing, shoes
- Hardwood furniture
- Appliances
- Irreplaceable photographs
- Bedding, sheets



STEP 3: Clean and disinfect one room at a time

Use two buckets for cleaning.

- Use one bucket for cleaning solution and another bucket for clean rinse water.
- Rinse your mop, sponge, or rags in the clean rinse water and wring it dry.
- Re-wet your mop in the cleaning solution.
- Replace the clean rinse water often.

Disinfect to kill germs, mildew, and odor.

- Apply disinfectant solution to the room or item.
- Allow sufficient contact and drying time.

Cleaning products:

- Dish washing liquid for lightly soiled items.
- Laundry detergent for heavier soiled items.

Disinfectant products:

- Use a mixture of bleach and hot water (4 to 8 tablespoons of bleach to 1 gallon of water) to remove odor and bacteria.
- Many household products are capable of disinfecting surfaces. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions on the product label.

Never mix bleach with ammonia or other household chemicals. This can create a poisonous gas.

STEP 4: Ventilate or dehumidify the house until it is completely dry.

- Open exterior doors and windows.
- Open interior doors and cabinet doors.
- Circulate air using several box fans.
- Run a dehumidifier and or air conditioner.



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR BUILDING BACKUPS

A sewer can back up in your building for many reasons. The financial assistance available to you depends on the cause of the backup:

MSD Issues

- **Overcharged Sewer Line-** If excessive rain falls in a short timeframe, it can fill the sewer line so much that it can't hold anymore water. If sewer lines discharge into your basement as a result, MSD will reimburse up to \$3,000 -- with a \$100 deductible -- to cover damage that occurs. Because damages may exceed this amount, MSD recommends homeowners obtain additional coverage through their insurance company.
- **Blocked Sewer Line-** If a sewer line collapses or is blocked by tree roots, or other debris that has washed into the sewer, it can cause a building backup. If this is the cause, MSD will reimburse the homeowner for the adjusted losses.

Non MSD Issues

- **Lateral line problems** -- The most common cause of backups is a blockage in your private lateral line -- the sewer line that runs from your home to the main sewer line. These sewers can be damaged by items flushed down a toilet or drain, tree roots, grease, and other blockages. The homeowner is responsible for the maintenance and repair of this line.
- **Overland Flooding-** Water can enter your home through doors, windows, and/or cracks in the foundation following a heavy rain. Damage caused by overland flooding are the responsibility of the homeowner.

To be eligible for coverage, contact MSD at (314) 768-6260 within 30 days of the backup.

HOW DO I DOCUMENT MY LOSSES?

Take pictures and/or video of the basement before cleaning. Also photograph all damaged items, and write a description of each, including when they were purchased and their approximate cost. After fully documenting your losses, throw away any items that are damaged or might cause mold or mildew.

Will I be reimbursed for the damage, repair, and cleanup costs?

Whether MSD or your private insurance will reimburse you for your losses depends on the cause of the flooding.

If the problem is caused by a public sewer line:

- If a backup is caused by a public sewer line, an MSD crew will make the necessary repairs to the sewer. They won't need to enter your home or business to do it.
- MSD will arrange for an insurance adjuster to visit your home and verify your damages. The adjuster will address financial assistance.

If the problem is caused by the line from your home to the street:

- These lines, known as lateral sewers, are your private property. MSD's insurance programs will not cover backups caused by a faulty residential lateral line. Contact your insurance agent to learn more about the coverage you may have.
- Many municipalities also offer lateral line insurance to residents to help offset the cost of lateral repairs. For additional information, contact the Lateral Line Insurance Program sponsored by St. Louis City at (314) 647-3111, St. Louis County at (314) 615-8427 or your governing municipality.
- Most homeowner's insurance only covers damage from water that backs up through the sewer, drains or sump pumps if you obtain a special building backup rider. MSD encourages homeowners to verify their coverage with their insurance company and consider adding this rider. Flood insurance typically excludes backups from sewer and drain backups.