



LATERAL REPAIRS



Preventing sewer backups

Many blockages can be prevented by placing wipes, paper towels, cooking grease and other household waste in the garbage, not the sink or toilet.

These simple steps help keep plumbing and the sewer system operating properly, and can prevent costly and time-consuming repairs.

In urbanized Washington County, Clean Water Services manages the public sanitary sewer conveyance and treatment system. Homes and businesses are connected to the public system with private plumbing, known as private laterals. A properly operating lateral requires very little maintenance; however, backups do sometimes occur. When a backup or blockage occurs in private plumbing, an inspection of the system will help determine how to repair the problem.

What to do if your sewer backs up

- Check to see if the backup is affecting the entire building, or just isolated drains or fixtures.
- If the problem is isolated, the problem may be remedied using a drain snake. A homeowner may choose to do this work, or hire a private plumber.
- If a drain snake does not fix the problem, the plumber may try to identify and resolve the blockage by accessing the system using a fixture or the cleanout.
- If the problem persists, the plumber may video the inside of the lateral to identify the problem.
- If the lateral requires significant work, it may be necessary for the plumber to get a plumbing permit and erosion control permit, and request utility locates before they make the repair.
- If the defect is structural and within the right of way, CWS may be able to help. The plumber, homeowner or a realtor can submit a video to CWS Field Operations to request assistance.



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How can Clean Water Services help?

CWS conducts preventative maintenance of the public system, including the mainline in the street.

CWS also makes repairs to structural defects in laterals that occur within the public right of way. Structural defects include:

- Cracked, broken or crushed pipe.
- Open or offset joints.
- Root intrusion.
- Other imperfections in a lateral that may allow surface water or groundwater to enter the sanitary sewer system.

A sag or inconsistent grade in the lateral, also known as a “belly,” is *not* a structural defect. If a private homeowner, plumber, or realtor believes that a defect is the responsibility of CWS, they can submit a video to CWS to request assistance. CWS will review the video, and may even take a second video to evaluate a request.

CWS staff will keep the requester informed on the status of the video submittal and any required repairs. Written documentation may be requested using the CWS public records request form.

Resources

- CWS Field Operations: 503.547.8100
- Request a free “Freeze the Grease, Save the Drain” kit: 503.681.3678
- Print your own “Wipes Clog Pipes” sign: cleanwaterservices.org/wipes.
- Request a plumbing permit: Contact the building department for the city or county within which the property is located.
- Locate utilities: Call 811 or visit digsafelyoregon.com
- Request an erosion control permit from CWS Development Services: 503.681.5100
- Request written documentation of status of video submission and any required repairs: cleanwaterservices.org/recordsrequest.



Everything we do at Clean Water Services aims to protect public health while enhancing the natural environment of the Tualatin River Watershed.

Clean Water Services

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2025 SW Merlo Court
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