

Sanitary Sewer Collection System

The Rice Lake Utilities Wastewater Department is responsible for inspecting and maintaining the collection system infrastructure and the sanitary lift stations to ensure uninterrupted collection of wastewater. Sanitary sewer disposal needs are served by Rice Lake Public Utilities.

The City has 77 miles of sanitary sewer lines. Most of the lines are in the streets or alleys. Some run through utility easements in grassy areas. Each year, the City cleans approximately 90% of the City's sanitary sewer lines. Lines requiring a higher level of maintenance are cleaned more frequently. This routine maintenance helps to prevent blockages and backups.

The sanitary sewer lines are cleaned using high performance sewer cleaning equipment. A cleaning nozzle is propelled from one manhole to the next using water under high pressure. The nozzle is then pulled back to the starting manhole. As the nozzle is pulled back, water scours the inside of the sanitary sewer pipe removing scale, debris and roots. Any debris in the pipe is pulled back with the water. The debris is removed from the manhole with a vacuum unit. If heavy roots are found, they are cut with a root cutter. This process is repeated on every sewer line cleaned.

Sewer Backups

Property owners experiencing a sewer backup may call the following:

Call: (715) 234-7004

24 hours a day- 7 days a week

After hours, weekends and holidays

Utility crews will be dispatched to assess the situation. If it is determined that no blockage or restrictions exist in the City's sanitary sewer system, the property owner is advised to contact a professional plumber or drain cleaning service to have the private sewer service inspected. The Utilities cannot make a recommendation for drain cleaning services. A property owner may wish to obtain several estimates.

Property owners should be aware, if the problem is in the private sewer line, the property owner is responsible for clearing any blockage in the service line between the home and the City sanitary sewer main. This includes debris and tree roots. The property owner is also responsible for cleaning and repairing any damage done to the property by the backup.

The Utilities is not automatically liable for blockages in the City's sanitary sewer system. The Utilities is only liable for those damages if the backup was caused by the Utilities' negligence.

Many homeowners' insurance policies exclude damage resulting from sewer backups. However, some insurance companies do provide sewer backup coverage. If you are concerned about the possibility of a sewer backup and want to insure that you are covered, the Utilities urges you to check with your home insurer regarding the availability of sewer backup insurance.

Preventing Sewer Backups

Property owners can do many things to prevent their service from backing up. Remember, the very same things can help prevent backups in the City main as well.

- Grease: Cooking oil should be poured into a heat-resistant container and disposed of in the garbage after it cools, not down the drain. Some people assume that washing grease down the drain with hot water is satisfactory. This grease goes down the drain, cools off, and solidifies either in the drain, the property owner's service, or in the sewer main. When this happens, the line eventually clogs.

- Paper Products: Paper towels, disposable diapers, and feminine products cause many problems in the property owner's service as well as in the City main. These products do not deteriorate quickly. They become lodged in portions of the service and main, causing sewer backups. These products should be disposed of in the garbage.

- Sewer Root Control: The continual flow of nutrient-filled water found in sewer pipes attracts tree roots. Roots growing along pipes exert significant pressure on pipes. These roots may push into and around gasket connection points which may expand and break seals. Root infiltration can cause a blockage to the service resulting in sewage backup in your home and damage to your property.

- Tips for Controlling Roots: The conventional method of removing roots by a professional drain cleaning service involves cutting or tearing of roots to solve an immediate problem or stoppage, but this method does not retard the growth or destroy the roots outside the pipe. This is similar to pruning the bushes and shrubs surrounding your residence.

An annual chemical root control program is an effective preventive maintenance measure. A product that foams with the addition of water is the most effective means of coating the roots and pipe surfaces. These products may be purchased from your local hardware store or home center.

- Illegal Plumbing Connections: Do not connect French drains, sump pumps, roof gutter drains, or foundation drains to your sanitary sewer service. It is illegal and will cause debris and silt to clog your service line. Consult a plumber to correct any illegal connections.

Sewer Odors

Floor and sink drains usually have water filling the bottom of the drain trap which acts as a barrier between the air in the sewer line and the air in your home. When a drain trap becomes dry, sewer odors can enter into the residence. If you experience sewer odors in your home, run water down your drain.

Sump Pumps

If you use a sump pump in your basement, it is illegal to drain the water into the basement sanitary sewer drain or laundry tub. Sump pumps must be discharged outside of the house to the yard or drainway that will prevent the water from draining directly to the street. Call the Wastewater Department if you need more information.

Utility Billing Information

For questions on utility billing, please contact Rice Lake Utilities at (715) 234-7004

Other Sanitary Sewer Related Information

Sewer use ordinance

The City's Sewer Use Ordinance prohibits certain discharges into their sanitary sewer lines. Ordinance Link: <http://ecode360.com/6884491>

Equipment used in sewer maintenance process

The Wastewater department may use the following types of equipment when performing inspection and maintenance of its sanitary sewer system:

- Jetter/Vactor - The jetter uses a high pressure water system to clean the sewer main of debris, such as sand, grease, roots and other materials that settle in the sewer main. Using a high pressure water system, the jetter propels a hose, with a specially designed nozzle, into the sewer main. The hose is then pulled back slowly while the high pressure water system flushes the materials to a downstream manhole for removal by the Jetter/Vac truck. The Jet/Vac uses a positive displacement to create a vacuum that can lift debris from manholes.
- Rodding Machine - A rodding machine is designed to push or pull a specially designed steel rod while rotating in the sewer main. With the use of specially designed tools attached to the end of the rod, this machine is one of the most efficient and dependable methods for removing heavy root growths, sand, grease, and debris from storm, sanitary, and combined sewer pipes.
- TV Inspection - Closed circuit television video (CCTV) inspection equipment and pipeline inspection/asset management software is used to inspect sanitary and storm sewers. The system uses a self-propelled transporter to carry the camera down the sewer main. While the camera is in operation, visual data is recorded for maintenance assessment needs.