

PROTECTING OUR SEWER SYSTEM

Water and wastewater services are a major factor in protecting the health of our community. The everyday simplicity of turning on a faucet or flushing a toilet can easily be taken for granted, but the assurance of clean, safe water and wastewater treatment has only been with our community for about 100 years.

Prior to the development of public drinking water systems and wastewater treatment facilities, waterborne diseases commonly caused severe illness and even death. In the mid-1800s, the United States saw repeated outbreaks of cholera, a disease that is prevalent where water and wastewater treatment is not available. Delivering clean, safe water and maintaining our community's sanitation is a responsibility the City of Cedar Rapids takes very seriously.

We ask for your help to make sure our sanitary sewer system effectively removes wastewater away from your property. This pamphlet has helpful information on how you can help us protect our sanitary sewer system, reducing basement back-ups and sewer overflows.



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Protecting our Sewer System:

Disconnecting Sump Pumps

WHERE DOES YOUR SUMP PUMP DISCHARGE?

Sump pumps play an important role keeping groundwater out of your basement during storms. However, some downspouts deliver groundwater directly into the sanitary sewer system, which can quickly overwhelm the capacity of the sanitary sewer system resulting in basement back-ups, sewer overflows and straining the capacity of our Water Pollution Control Facility.

Making sure your sump pump does not add groundwater to our sanitary sewer system is just one action homeowners can take to preserve our precious water resources and protect the health of our community.

Improperly connected sump pumps deliver about 60 gallons of groundwater to the sanitary sewer every minute they run, which can quickly overwhelm the sewer capacity.

Correcting this problem is easy. Follow the directions in this pamphlet to help make a difference in our sanitary sewer system.

SANITARY OR STORM SEWER?

In Cedar Rapids we have two separate sewer systems. The sanitary sewer system takes wastewater generated in your home to the Water Pollution Control Facility for treatment before sending it back to the Cedar River.

The storm sewer system collects rain water that falls in the city and conveys that water directly to our streams and the Cedar River. It is important to protect the quality of our stormwater by keeping litter, chemicals, oil and pet waste out of the street.

HOW TO DISCONNECT YOUR SUMP PUMP



Step 1: Unplug your sump pump from the outlet*.

Step 2: Remove the pipe that discharges the groundwater into the floor drain.

Step 3: Seal off the old connection to the sanitary sewer promptly to prevent sewer gas from entering your home.

Step 4: Re-route your sump pump discharge line away from your foundation onto your yard, into a garden, or into a rain garden on your property.



* If your sump pump is directly wired rather than using a plug/outlet, contact a licensed and bonded electrician to disconnect your sump pump.

KEEP THE SEWERS FLOWING

In addition to limiting the amount of groundwater entering the sewers, there are a few things homeowners can do to help keep the sewers flowing:

AVOID FOG (FATS, OILS, & GREASE)

Fats, oils and grease build up in the sewer over time and can cause sewer blockages. Collect your extra fats, oils, and grease and place them in the garbage.

COMPOST FOOD SCRAPS

Small amounts of food scraps can be sent down the garbage disposal, but lacing large amounts of vegetable waste down the garbage disposal at one time can lead to sewer back-ups.

Fruit and vegetable peelings can be composted in a backyard bin or placed in the YARDY cart for collection. The material breaks down into nutrient rich compost that can be applied to lawns and gardens to enrich the soil.

PLANT TREES STRATEGICALLY

There are a lot of considerations that go into deciding where to plant trees, make sure the location of your sewer is one of these. Tree roots seek out the moisture in the sewer and can clog the pipes. Silver Maple and Willow trees are particularly notorious for clogging sewer pipes.

