

Lariat Article – April issue

The Good, the Bad and the YUCKY Truth About Sewer Lines; *from the desks of staff at the Village of Clinton*

We flush toilets, shower, wash dishes and do many other daily tasks that we don't give a second thought to, but when your sink unkindly "returns" what's been rinsed down, all of a sudden "sewer" becomes the focus of our day.

If the sewage backs up through sinks, toilets or other drains in your home, the cause is somewhere in your sewage line between your home and the connection point to the system. This is the most common type of blockage and is the responsibility of the homeowner.

The most common blockages for sewer back up are flushed down the toilet. Commonly found are baby diapers, flushable wipes, feminine hygiene products, cat litter, oil and grease. As with any backup issue, prevention is key. Instead, throw these items in the trash.

There are times when weather can make matters worse. Freezing and thawing events can trigger obstructions in pipes and makes freezing more likely to happen.

Tree roots are also a concern. Tree roots seek water and burrow into pipes forming root balls that clog lines. To remove the root ball, roots must be cut with a circular saw by your sewer service contractor. In this case, tree removal is recommended to prevent further issues. There are also certain products available that can kill roots and be used as a maintenance routine.

Grease clogs can happen when fats from your cooking get rinsed down the sink. Coffee grinds, orange peels and eggshells love to coagulate with grease and contribute to the blockage. These items are best in your compost for the health of your garden. Grease clogs typically occur 25 feet into your sewage line. With no hot water to cut through the grease, it hardens and builds up over time creating a backup problem. It should be noted that if a blockage has formed in the main sewer line due to grease, you may be responsible for the costs associated to its removal.

If your sewer backs up, you'll need to remove the blockage. You can call the Village to borrow 'the snake' and try to dislodge the blockage through a cleanout valve. Failing this, you'll need to call in the professionals. Keep in mind that homeowners are responsible for any problems from the home to the sewer connection point (and beyond if the blockage has been caused by you). Speak with your insurance agent for cost coverage. The Village is responsible after the connection point through to the mainline in terms of breaks or faulty pipe.

Some pipes in the Village of Clinton are more than 50 years old. As our infrastructure ages, it nears the need for replacement, but efforts are made by the Village to extend the life by relining the pipes and having internal video taken to monitor conditions.

Each situation can be different and often the full detail may not be known until the pipes are dug up. If you have questions, feel free to contact the Village office where staff will do their best to interpret the Bylaw. The sewer Bylaw can also be found on the Village website.