

What to do if sewage backs up and contaminates your home?

Once a back-up occurs, contact us immediately. While you are waiting for one of our crews to come out and assess the situation, please also contact your neighbors to see if they are experiencing any problems. If there is a problem with the main sewage line, MATR is responsible to fix it. However, if there is a problem with the sewage lateral, the portion typically between the property line and your home, the homeowner is responsible to fix it. Once the problem is corrected and the sewage has dissipated in your home, you may begin the clean-up process.

Steps to Clean Up the Contaminated Area

1. Clean and disinfect washable surfaces that have been exposed to sewage.
2. Wash with soap and water, then disinfect with a mixture of a quarter cup of household bleach per gallon of water.
3. Discard upholstered furniture, mattresses, bedding and stuffed toys soaked in flood waters.
4. Sweep or vacuum soaked and soiled carpeting, then shampoo it with a commercial rug cleaner.
5. Clean, dry and check your furnace, water heater, washer, dryer and other appliances before using them. Don't handle electrical equipment in wet areas.
6. Call a plumber or an electrician for professional service.
7. To remove odors from refrigerators and freezers, use warm water with a detergent and wipe dry. If an odor persists, try a solution of one teaspoon of baking soda or one cup of household ammonia per gallon of water.
8. Throw away all foods that have encountered flood waters.
9. Make sure everyone involved in the flood cleanup has an up-to-date tetanus shot. Boosters are recommended every ten years.

Property Damage from Sewage Backups

If you have ever experienced property damage caused by a sewage backup, chances are you found that damage was not covered by your insurance.

All local governments in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are afforded sovereign immunity against third party claims for property loss damage under the Political Subdivision Torts Claim Act. Some exceptions do apply, but generally conditions are very specific for exceptions to be validated.

The Tort Claims Act states, “a local agency cannot be held liable for a dangerous condition of water or sewage system unless it had actual notice or could reasonably be charged with notice under the circumstances at sufficient time prior to the event to have taken measure to protect against the dangerous condition.”

Most sewage and water system backups are unforeseen events, and generally don't fall under the exception. Therefore, damages to your property are not covered by MATR. MATR encourages you to review your current insurance policy with your insurance provider.