

## Town of Tryon Sewer Back-up Policy

The Town of Tryon is responsible for maintaining sewer mains and manholes which are located in public rights-of-way (Town and State maintained roads) and Town owned easements. Property owners are responsible for maintaining sewer laterals which are located on private property.

The Town of Tryon Public Works Department makes a concerted effort, through an intensive preventive maintenance program, to keep the Town's 65+ miles of sewer system in a good state of repair. Occasionally, however, conditions develop within the system that may cause sewage to back-up into a residence or business.

The purpose of this Policy is to make clear the property owner's responsibilities concerning sewage lines located on his or her property and the steps a property owner should take when a sewage back-up occurs into a residence or business. This policy also addresses some reasons why sewer back-ups occur and what can be done to prevent them.

### I. PROPERTY OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITY

A property owner is responsible for keeping his or her building's sewer line(s) free from blockages between the structure(s) being served and the sewer main.

If a customer discovers a problem with his or her sewer connection and/or lateral, the customer may contact Tryon Town Hall (828-859-6654) and request that Public Works Department personnel troubleshoot the cause of the problem. Public Works personnel will respond by inspecting the downstream wastewater collection main and the sewer lateral if a cleanout is located at the edge of and within the public road or utility right of way.

If sewage backs up into the property owner's property, the property owner should contact Town Hall immediately. The Public Works Department will respond as quickly as possible to assess the situation and ensure that the Town's sewer system serving the property is flowing freely.

Town Public Works crews are not authorized to provide any information concerning the investigation or the cause of the sewer back-up. The Town Manager, or the Town Manager's designee, shall be the Town's authorized spokesperson.

If wastewater back-up has damaged a property owner's property, the resident should take reasonable and prudent action to prevent further damage. It is not necessary for an agent of the Town to see the property "as is." A resident should take whatever action is believed necessary to correct the problem. If you believe the Town of Tryon is responsible for the damage to your property, please contact Town Hall (828-859-6654) as soon as possible after the event. To ensure that there is no misunderstanding of the details, submit your claim in writing, including expenses you have incurred for cleaning, repairs or replacement of lines or fixtures, to:

Town of Tryon  
Attn: Town Clerk  
301 N. Trade Street  
Tryon, NC 28782

### II. WHY DO SEWER LINES BACK UP?

Many things may become lodged in a sewer line which can result in a back-up, e.g., sticks, rocks, bricks, pieces of broken pipe, rags, GREASE, paper towels, newspaper, sanitary napkins, plastics, etc. While it is illegal for persons to place or discharge such things into the sewer system, these items still unfortunately appear. Two of the leading causes of blockages and back-ups are GREASE and tree roots. Tree roots grow naturally and intrude into the Town's sewer lines. While there is not a lot the Town can do to prevent tree root expansion, the Public Works Department does employ preventative measures to inhibit tree root growth and remove tree roots from its sewer lines.

Fats, Oils, & Grease (FOG) are a major contributor to sewer back-ups and overflows. The Town **requires commercial users discharging wastewater into the sanitary sewer system** to install and maintain a grease trap or grease interceptor. (Code of Tryon § 51.37) Residential users should never discard fats, oils or grease into a drain. If recycling FOG is not an option, it should be disposed of properly. For more information on FOG disposal, go to:

<http://tryon-nc.com/our-town/town-code-of-ordinances/> and see the provisions of Chapter 51: Sewers.

### III. CAN ANYTHING BE DONE TO PREVENT FUTURE BACK-UPS?

If a property owner has experienced a sewer back-up, or if the residence or business is located in a low area or is lower than the street level, we suggest that a licensed plumber be consulted about the possibility of installing a backwater prevention device. This device, if properly installed and **MAINTAINED**, can prevent sewer from backing up into a house's or business's plumbing. The installation and maintenance of a backwater prevention device is the customer's responsibility and **at the customer's expense**.

### IV. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- *Sewage is backing up into my house/building through overflowing toilets, sinks, bathtubs, dishwasher, and/or washing machines. What should I do?*  
If these problems occur, call the Town to request a determination of whether the location of the blockage is on the Town's or the customer's line. There may be a problem in the public main. The Town of Tryon is only responsible for publicly owned and maintained sewers lines.  
If overflow is constant, the homeowner should remove the cap on the cleanout located outside the building. The homeowner can use towels, sheets, rags, etc. to keep the sewage from spreading or damaging other parts of the house. Call Tryon Town Hall immediately, 828-859-6654.
- *I have slow drainage through my toilets, showers and sinks. What can I do about it?*  
If neighbors are having similar slow drainage, there is a chance that there is a problem in the public main. For service call 828-859-6654.
- *A contractor or utility broke my sewer lateral. What should I do?*  
The contractor or utility is responsible for repairing laterals that the contractor damages.
- *There is a manhole cover in my neighborhood that rattles and continues to irritate me every time a vehicle rolls over it. What can I do about it?*  
Occasionally, there may be a separation between the base and the cover of the manhole or rodding inlet causing the cover to rattle when a vehicle rolls over it. To report a rattling manhole cover, call 828-859-6654.
- *What can I do about terrible sewer odors?*  
First, try to determine where the odor is coming from (inside the home or outside in the street). If an odor is coming from inside the home, there may be a problem with the internal plumbing system. Check your internal system first. If the problem exists outdoors, call the Town of Tryon at 828-859-6654.
- *I paid a plumber to repair my sewer lateral. It turns out the problem was occurring in the public sewer. Can I be reimbursed for my plumbing bill?*  
The Town will not pay for private plumber bills unless the Town directs that a plumber be called to solve a problem that is the Town's responsibility. Occasionally, homeowners call a plumber or sewer and drain service to correct a problem with their private sewer laterals, and it turns out that the cause of the problem was a stoppage in the publicly owned sewer. In these instances, the Town may reimburse the homeowner for a portion of the cost of the plumber or drain service. To have your case reviewed, follow these simple steps:

1. Write a letter outlining the circumstances and enclose a copy of the paid **invoice from the plumber or drain service. Don't forget to include your phone number!**

2. Submit the paperwork to:  
Town of Tryon  
Attn: Town Clerk  
301 N. Trade Street  
Tryon, NC 28782

## HELPFUL HINTS

Here are a few hints to help you prevent problems with your sewer service:

- Do not use the toilet as a garbage can. DO NOT flush rags, sanitary napkins, plastic items, cigarette butts, etc., which may clog your sewer line. Sewer taps are generally a minimum of 4 inches unless the customer uses a pump. Almost all of the Town's sewer mains are a minimum of 8 inches in diameter.
- DO NOT DISPOSE OF GREASE IN THE DRAIN.
- Use the garbage disposal with enough water to flush debris all the way to the sewer main. Otherwise, grease and detergent may harden and clog your line.
- Do not plant trees near your sewer lateral.
- Do not connect French drains, downspouts, sump pumps, etc., directly into the sewer line.
- Do install a Backwater Prevention Device.
- Know the location of the cleanout on your property edge so that your plumber and/or Town employees can readily ensure that the Town's portion of the system is running free. Ensure you maintain the cleanout on your property.
- The Town of Tryon Public Works crews are experienced employees who may be able to suggest a solution to your problem. However, they are NOT authorized to enter and clear stoppages on private property.
- Property owners should be aware that many property insurance policies exclude damage from sewer back-ups. It is suggested that property owners check their policies and add this coverage. The Town's insurance will only pay for damage caused by negligence on the part of the Town.
- The Town will not pay for private plumber bills unless the Town directs that a plumber be called to solve a problem that is the Town's responsibility. Property owners are advised to call the Town immediately (828-859-6654) in the event of sewer back-ups which could possibly be caused by a problem in Town maintained lines. The Town will assist property owners in locating the problem, advise the property owner on action needed, and correct the problem if it is a Town responsibility.

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