

# Backups

A backup occurs when wastewater flows back into a building as a result of a blockage in the service line or in the City sewer main. Wastewater will flow out of floor drains, bathtub or shower drains, or toilets during a backup. Backups normally affect only buildings with basements. When flow in a sewer pipe is blocked, water will build up behind the blockage and exit the sewer system at the lowest available point. In buildings that have basements, the drains for basement fixtures may be close to the elevation of the sewer main. In this case, the drains may provide the lowest point for water to flow out of the sewer. Buildings without basements that are built entirely above the ground surface usually are not affected by backups.



If the backup results from a blockage in the service line from the house to the City sewer main, turning off all water in the building will stop wastewater from entering the building. In this case, water being used inside the building is the only source of water, and turning off all taps should stop the inflow and limit the volume of water that enters the building. Water from a service line blockage is likely to be nearly clear or a light gray in color, and have a mild odor.

If the backup results from a blockage in a sanitary sewer main, turning off water in the house will not affect the flow of wastewater into the building. Wastewater from a sewer main blockage is likely to be dark or black in color and have a strong odor similar to rotten eggs. The dark color and the odor are both a result of bacteria acting on organic material in wastewater under low oxygen conditions. If the cause of a backup from a blockage in a sewer main, it is important to call the Wastewater Department as quickly as possible. During normal business hours call 553-2298. After hours, call 553-2538.



The Wastewater Department maintains standby crews on duty 24 hours per day, seven days per week, weekends and holidays included, to respond to emergencies. The sooner a City crew can arrive on site and clear the blockage, the less water will flow into the building. Plumbers lack the equipment to clear blockages in City sewer mains. If you are unsure of the source of the backup, call the City first. The City crew will respond at no cost to you. If you call a plumber and the plumber is unable to resolve the problem, he will still charge you a service fee. Unfortunately the City is not able to reimburse for plumber's fees.

## **Reimbursement Policy**

The Pueblo City Council has adopted a No-Fault Property Damage policy that allows the Wastewater Department to provide financial assistance to residents who have experienced property damage from backups. The Wastewater Department can reimburse residents for cleanup costs, up to a maximum of \$3,500. Cleanup costs can include such things as labor for removing wastewater and damaged property, removal of soiled carpet and carpet pad, disinfection of floors and walls, rental for pumps, floor buffers, fans, or dehumidifiers, purchase of cleaning supplies, and similar costs. Reimbursements for cleanup costs will be based on invoices for materials and services.

Claims for replacement of damaged property can be submitted to the City by calling the Wastewater Department at 553-2898.