

**Fall 2023**



# IS **BACKFLOW** A THREAT TO YOUR HOME?

The most common type of backup in Paducah and McCracken County is caused during heavy rainfall or flooding. Older sewer mains are often susceptible to leaking during rain events or have been constructed to actually carry rainwater in addition to sanitary flow. Heavy rain events can cause too much flow for a particular sewer main to handle, causing the flow to seek alternate exit points, including inside a house or basement. In addition, blockages can occur in sewer mains due to naturally occurring items, such as roots or foreign objects that sewer mains are not designed to handle. Most backflows only occur in houses that have basements or that are constructed in low areas or below manholes in the area. There are steps a homeowner can take to proactively reduce this possibility for their home.

One way to prevent or reduce the threat of backflow is to hire a qualified plumber to install a device called a **backflow prevention valve** or a **backflow preventer**. When properly installed and maintained, this valve creates a one-way system in the sewer line in your yard or in a drain line in your basement. This allows sewage to leave your home and prevents contaminated water from re-entering your home. Costs for installing these are dependent upon the type of plumbing your home has and the difficulty of the installation.

Always consult a licensed professional before installing any type of backflow preventer. In certain instances, for example, when a house sewer also accepts rain water flow from the roof or area drains, a backflow preventer cannot typically be installed. It is also important to note that the valves are not 100% effective and require regular inspection and maintenance.

The Paducah McCracken Joint Sewer Agency provides wastewater collection and treatment throughout most of the City of Paducah and McCracken County. JSA is responsible for operating and maintaining three wastewater treatment plants, 385 miles of gravity sewer and 75 lift stations. For more information, please contact the JSA at 270.575.0056 or visit our website at [www.jointsewer.com](http://www.jointsewer.com).

# DOES YOUR INSURANCE COVER **SEWER AND WATER DAMAGE?**

While the purpose of homeowners' insurance is to protect your property, most policies do not include damage related to sewage backups and water damage. In most cases, the homeowner will need to purchase a special rider that provides coverage in the event that either of these events occurs. It is especially important to make certain that areas of your home that lie below ground are adequately insured.

If you are not sure what damage your policy includes, then contact your home insurer and find out what sewage backup insurance is available through your current policy or what additional insurance can be purchased to address these issues.

As with other municipalities, the JSA does not assume financial responsibility for damages that result from sewer backups related to conditions that are beyond our control.

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## WHAT DO I DO IF THERE IS A **PROBLEM WITH THE SEWER?**

If you experience a sewer back-up or if all of the wastewater drains in your residence or business are stopped up, please call JSA at (270) 575-0056. JSA will check the sewer main to ensure it is operating properly. If the problem is in JSA's sewer main, the stoppage will be cleared, the sewer repaired, or the problem otherwise addressed by JSA.

If the problem is not located within the JSA system, the property owner will be advised to contact a plumber or sewer contractor. JSA personnel will not perform any work on private property except within a public easement.

## WHAT ARE THE PROPERTY **OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?**

The property owner is responsible for all maintenance, operation, and cleaning of the sewer service lateral from the building to the point of connection with the JSA main sewer. Repairs and reconstruction of the sewer service lateral from the building to a public roadway shall be the responsibility of the owner.

If the property owner's contractor is unable to clear a stoppage due to a structural defect in the sewer service lateral located within public right-of-way, JSA should be notified while the contractor is still on location. JSA may perform a repair of the sewer service lateral located within the public right-of-way at no charge to the customer. If the homeowner elects to pursue a repair on a portion of the service lateral located within the right-of-way

with a private plumber, JSA will not reimburse the homeowner for the repair. Prior to any work on a sewer service lateral, JSA may also require the property owner to install a cleanout (inspection/cleaning port) on the service lateral at the easement or right-of-way line.

## WHAT IF THE PROBLEM IS JUST **A SEWER ODOR IN MY HOUSE OR BUSINESS? WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

Turn on all water sources in your house or business and pour water in any floor drains to ensure that the traps are full of water. If this does not help the situation, contact a plumber or sewer contractor.

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST **TO HAVE JSA CHECK ON A SEWER PROBLEM?**

JSA does not charge for evaluating the location of the problem or correcting a stoppage or defect located within JSA's right-of-way. This work is financed through sewer user fees. JSA, however, will not assume the cost of the plumber or contractor's call, regardless of the location of the stoppage. Homeowners should contact a responsible plumber for evaluations on private property.