



## **Sewer Service Line Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Difference Between Sanitary Sewer and Storm Water Sewer Pipes?**

A sanitary sewer pipe (or sewer main) serves to collect wastewater from sewer service connections from homes and businesses and transports it to a wastewater treatment plant. These pipes (or mains) are owned, operated & maintained by the Lakehaven Water & Sewer District within Lakehaven's sewer service area boundaries.

A storm sewer pipe (or stormwater main) is designed to carry rainwater away from the property. Storm sewer pipes are normally much larger than sanitary sewer pipes, because they are designed to carry much larger volumes of water (collected from roof drains, sump pumps, and catch basins located along streets & within vehicle parking areas. These pipes (or mains) are owned, operated & maintained by the local city or county land use agency.

The sanitary sewer and stormwater systems are separate and not allowed to be combined.

### **What is a Side, Lateral, or Building Sewer?**

A sewer service connection line, also known as a side sewer, sewer lateral, or building sewer line, is an underground pipe that carries wastewater from a residence (or other building structure) to the District's sanitary sewer main, where it further flows to a wastewater treatment plant for treatment & ultimate discharge to Puget Sound. This pipe was likely installed when the home or business was constructed and was paid for by the property owner at the time of connection. The responsibility for maintaining these individual side sewer lines resides with the individual property owner. **For maintenance purposes, each sewer service connection should have an existing sewer clean-out located somewhere near the building/foundation, to allow access to the sewer service pipe without excavating the entire line &/or installing a new clean-out for these purposes.**

### **Where is my Sewer Service Connection Line?**

A Sewer Service Connection Record indicates & identifies the sewer service connection line from the building(s) to the District's sewer main line. Lakehaven maintains a copy of these drawings for each individual sewer service connection. Contact Lakehaven's Development Engineering section at [DE@Lakehaven.org](mailto:DE@Lakehaven.org) for additional information.



## **What is the Property Owner's Responsibility?**

The cost of installing, testing, inspecting, maintaining, repairing, replacing, and relocating a sewer service connection line is the responsibility of the property owner. This responsibility also includes the obligation keep them in good working condition and to correct any leaks or ground settlements that may damage the public roads, Right-of-Way, and/or private property surfaces located above (or below) the sewer service pipe.

## **What are Common Sources of Sewer Problems?**

- Fats, oils & greases (FOG), sanitary cleaning wipes (even those branded as 'flushable', and/or other debris flushed from the home or business that accumulate in the building's plumbing or sewer service connection lines creating obstructions or blockages.
- Separation of pipe joints, pipe cracking, or pipe collapse which allows groundwater and soil to infiltrate into the sewer pipes creating obstructions or blockages.
- Tree or plant roots intruding into pipes creating obstructions or blockages.
- Un-authorized sewer connections from other sources which may overwhelm the capacity of the pipe, such as direct stormwater connections (e.g. gutter downspouts, sump pumps, etc.)

## **Who Should I Contact Regarding Sewer Service Problems?**

- [Lakehaven Water & Sewer District](#) can provide information regarding the existing sewer service connection, including any historical information on past issues &/or repairs.
- [Rooter Intrusion Services](#) unclog plumbing and private side sewers, typically using mechanical "snakes." If the clog is in the sewer service connection line, make sure the roofer service's snake cable is long enough to reach through your side sewer to the District's main sewer line (typically located underneath the street.)
- [Side Sewer \(Service\) Contractors](#) repair structural problems, such as breaks or holes in side sewers. Some contractors also might replace or unclog side sewers. See the District's authorized sewer service contractor list for contact information. A no-charge Lakehaven Sewer Service Connection Permit is required for all sewer service repair work. Any such work within a public right-of-way (road) or Lakehaven easement area requires the use of a Lakehaven-authorized contractor.
- [Plumbers](#) repair leaky or broken fixtures and install systems in new and remodeled buildings. If only some of your fixtures are not draining, or if your plumbing pipes are leaking, a plumber may be your best resource to remedy the problem.



## What Questions Should I Ask a Private Service Provider?

Where is the blockage? If your line is “snaked” (*presumably using an existing sewer service clean-out*), ask the service provider to write down the specific footage where the blockage was found (or where they believe it is). Also have the provider mark the spot on the ground. The mark can be helpful if you must dig up the pipe to repair it.

What is causing the problem? Have the service provider write down the probable cause of the blockage. Knowing the type of blockage will help determine what method should be used to open it, and if regular maintenance of your sewer service connection may be needed to prevent future blockages.

Should a video inspection be used to see blockages in my line? Video cameras are not always effective in determining what is blocking a line. They cannot provide a clear view under water and, thus, if a line is blocked and not draining, it may be difficult for a camera to detect the cause of a problem. Video inspections are very useful after the blockage has been cleared to determine the condition of your pipes and where future problems might turn up.

## What Can I Do to Prevent Sewer Backups in My Home/Business or in the District’s Main Lines?

- **NEVER** pour fats, oils or greases (FOG) into sinks, drains, or garbage disposals. The FOG will turn into a hard solid that blocks lines and can result in a sewer backups & overflows. **Let FOG cool down and dispose in the trash.**
- Keep trees away from your sewer service connection line. Roots from trees can grow into sewer line joints and obstruct flow.
- **NEVER** flush non-biodegradable items down the toilets.
- **NEVER** flush sanitary items, wipes, or diapers down a toilet, even if they say they are biodegradable or flushable.

## What Permits are Required to Repair or Replace a Sewer Service Connection Line?

For all new installations, or repair/replacement/disconnect of an existing sewer service line, you will need to obtain a Lakehaven Sewer Service Connection Permit. Application forms (connect or repair/disconnect) can be accessed at Lakehaven’s Availability & Service web page (<https://www.lakehaven.org/205/WaterSewer-Availability-Service>); simply complete & submit the appropriate form to Development Engineering staff a [DE@Lakehaven.org](mailto:DE@Lakehaven.org). Lakehaven does not charge its typical permit fee, for any repair permit. If the repair is on private property that you do not own, you should have an easement for maintaining and repairing your side sewer. If not, you will also need to obtain permission from the property owner. In either case, it is best to discuss any planned work with the affected property owner before starting work. If a sewer service connection line problem is in the public right-of-way (City or County property), Lakehaven will also need to



obtain a right-of-way construction permit for you from the local right-of-way agency, prior to any work being performed. In this case, all work performed in public right-of-way (or Lakehaven easement) area must be by a Lakehaven-authorized contractor. The District maintains a list of authorized sewer service contractors to select from that you must use when work is within public right-of-way or Lakehaven easement. If damage from the sewer service connection line is causing a public safety or nuisance problem, Lakehaven may be required to expedite the repair with its own crews or contractor. However, the ultimate responsibility and cost of such repair remains with the property owner served by the sewer service connection line (including any right-of-way restoration requirements imposed by the underlying right-of-way agency).

### **How Do I Know Where it's Safe to Dig?**

**Call 811 Before You Dig!** The Utility Notification Center is the "one call" agency dedicated to protecting underground utilities and safeguarding citizens and construction personnel who work around utilities. You are required to call **811** at least 48 hours before beginning any excavation. This prevents damage to underground facilities, service interruptions, and bodily injury. The Utility Notification Center is open 24 hours a day, every day, and accepts calls from contractors, homeowners, or anyone planning to dig. Underground utility owners, such as Lakehaven, are required to locate their facilities prior to the excavation work being performed..

Should the work being done require or employ a contractor, the contractor is required by law to call for such utility locates.

### **What Preventative Maintenance Measures does the District take to keep Sewer Mains flowing properly?**

The Lakehaven Water & Sewer District uses the following methods to routinely clean and maintain sanitary sewer main pipes:

- Trouble areas, including neighborhoods served by older sewer mains or mains that have been known to have tree root intrusions, are kept on a routine maintenance schedule.
- Sewer main lines are cleaned routinely and as problems are reported.
- The District conducts sewer smoke or dye tests to identify main line cracks that can cause sewer leaks.
- The District uses a video camera to identify pipe cracks and/or deterioration.
- Based on any testing that is conducted, the District will prioritize replacement and/or rehabilitation of sewer mains as needed.