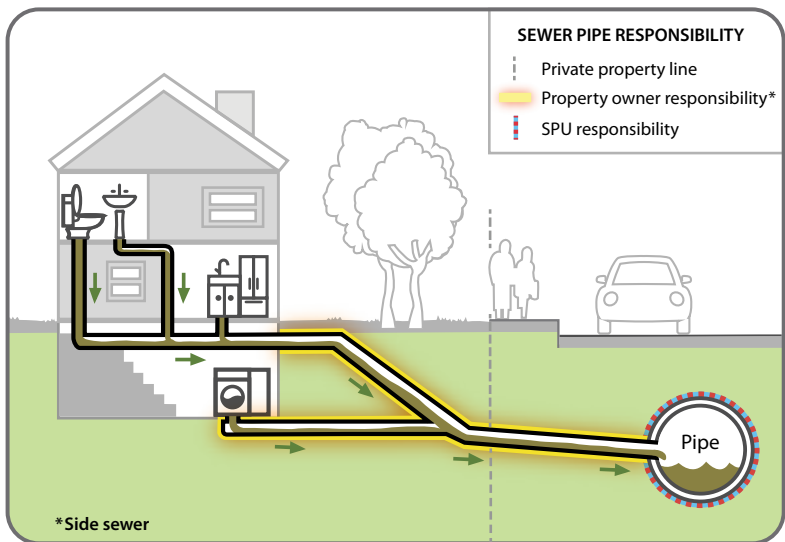




What is a “side sewer”?

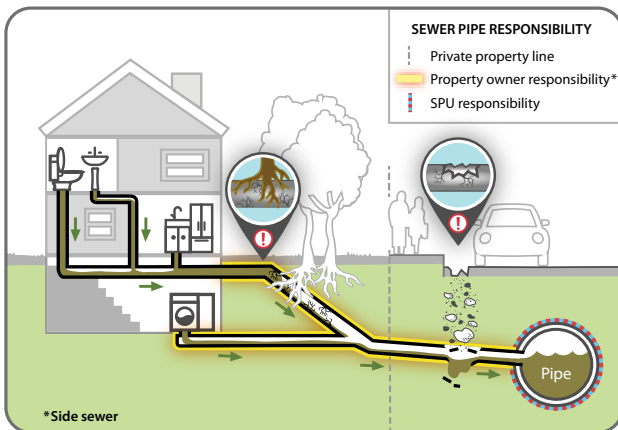
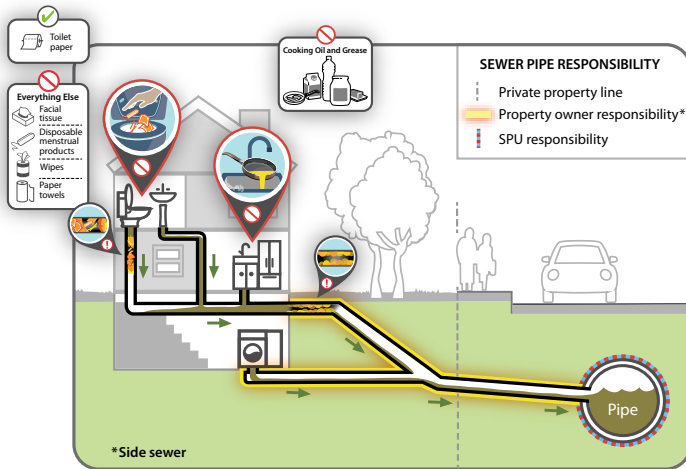
A “side sewer” is a privately owned sewer pipe that carries wastewater from a building’s sinks, drains, and toilets to the public sewer mainline. If you own your home or building, you also own your side sewer up until the public sewer pipe under a street near your home.



What is a sewer backup?

Sewer backups happen when sewage and/or dirty water (called wastewater) come up a sink, toilet or drain. They usually happen when something blocks the sewer pipe and prevents wastewater from flowing freely. Sewer backups need to be stopped and cleaned quickly to eliminate exposure to potentially harmful bacteria and viruses.

[See back page for information on financial assistance](#)



If you have a sewer backup:

Including when you suspect the backup is caused by extreme rainfall.

- 1. Protect people from exposure. Turn off power to eliminate electrical hazards.**
- 2. Call a plumber** – Refer to this handout for tips and questions to ask.
- 3. Call Seattle Public Utilities at (206) 386-1800.**
- 4. Document any damage & keep copies of all invoices for cleanup-related costs.** If the sewer backup was caused by a City issue you can file a claim with the City for reimbursement of your costs.
- 5. Clean up** as soon as possible to protect people from bacteria and viruses. If you clean the backup yourself, wear protective boots, rubber gloves and wash up thoroughly when you are finished.
- 6. Before attempting to clear your side sewer of a blockage, call Puget Sound Energy at 1-888-225-5773 in order to avoid damaging a gas line.**

Which private service should I call?

Many companies offer a full range of services, including clearing, repairing, and replacing sewer lines or pipes, but some specialize in certain areas. Make sure to ask which services are provided.

To fix a clog in your home or personal sewer pipe:

Contact a roter service.

They can use water pressure or mechanical “snakes” to unclog plumbing and side sewers. Ask if the roter service’s cable is long enough to reach from your side sewer to the city’s main sewer pipe (typically located underneath the street or alley). Some roter companies also can repair and/or replace side sewers. Common reasons for a blockage include tree roots, cooking oil and grease buildup or because objects other than toilet paper have been flushed.

To repair or replace a sewer pipe:

Contact a side sewer contractor.

They can repair and/or replace side sewer defects, such as breaks or holes. Some also might unclog pipes. A repair that does not require digging could range from \$60-\$200 per foot. A repair that requires digging in the public right-of-way would be even more costly.

To fix a leaky/broken sink, drain, or toilet:

Contact a plumber.

They repair leaky or broken fixtures and they install plumbing systems in new construction and remodeling within the home. If some fixtures are not draining or if your pipes are leaking, a plumber might be able to fix the problem.

Deciding who to hire

- Ask friends and relatives for recommendations.
- Check with the Better Business Bureau at 206-431-2222 to find reputable companies.
- Since companies offer a wide range of prices, it’s a good idea to get at least 3 written bids before hiring.
- All repairs performed in the city right-of-way must be done by a contractor licensed and bonded to work in Seattle.

Topics to cover with your service provider

Make sure you have all questions answered in clear writing at the time of service with the provider's signature and date.

- **What is causing the problem?** Have the service provider write down the probable cause of the blockage. This will help determine what method should be used to fix it, and if regular maintenance of your side sewer is needed to prevent future backups.
- **Where is the blockage?** If your pipe is rootered, have the service provider write down the specific location (in feet through the line) where the blockage was found (or where they think the blockage 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.
- **Is a camera the best way to see blockages in my line?** No. Cameras cannot see under water, so if a line is blocked and not draining, the camera won't be able to see inside your pipes. Camera inspections, after the blockage has been cleared, can help determine the condition of your pipes and where future problems might turn up.
- **Can I be provided a copy of the inspection video?** Yes! Make sure this is in your bids. Most contractors can record and provide you a copy on a USB drive or upload it to a website and provide a link. Having a copy for your records can be useful if you ever wish to **file a claim with the City**, have the City review the video for possible damage to the connection, or to see if the side sewer is deteriorating over time.

Financial assistance for side sewer repair

The Seattle Office of Housing offers Home Repair Loans for low to moderate-income families who own a single-family home.

Visit: seattle.gov/housing/homeowners/home-repair to learn about income requirements and loan terms.

To request a Home Repair Loan application, please call (206) 684-0458 or email HomeRepair@seattle.gov