



## Information Regarding Sewer Back-ups and Public Act 222

*Tips for understanding the cause, prevention, and what to do when you experience a sewer back-up*

### **Sanitary Sewers**

Residents may occasionally experience sanitary sewer back-ups due to typical problems associated with the operation of a sewer system. Potential problems can include tree roots, clogs or buildup in the line, illegal connections, foreign objects being introduced into the sewer, intense rainfall, etc. City staff will identify and clear them as quickly as possible to minimize any possible private property damage and inconvenience to the citizens.

### **What should I do if I am experiencing a sanitary sewer system back-up?**

Contact the City of Grand Rapids 311 Call Center by dial 3-1-1. You can expect a maintenance crew to respond as soon as possible. Time of day and workload do affect response capabilities. City crews will advise you if it is determined that the problem is not in the City's sanitary sewer main. At that point, it would be established that the problem is in the lateral line which is the citizen's responsibility. If it is a lateral line problem, you can choose to have your lateral line checked and/or cleaned by a plumber or sewer cleaner. For insurance purposes it is advisable to document any damage and take photographs prior to beginning clean-up. Residents are **HIGHLY** encouraged to maintain an insurance policy that covers instances of sanitary sewer overflow or back-up.

### **Sewer back-up prevention**

Citizens should have their lateral sewer lines checked on a regular basis for blockage and root damage. Sanitary sewer laterals and sewer pipes are designed to carry wastewater with toilet paper and minor amounts of food waste. It is important to keep wipes, disposable diapers, cooking grease, butter, margarine, feminine hygiene products, rags, medications, and plastic items out of the sewer line.

### **City Responsibility – Municipal Liability for Sewage Disposal System**

Per the State of Michigan Public Act 222, all claims for damages relating to sewer back-ups filed against a municipality must demonstrate the following: the sanitary sewer main had a defect; the City knew, or, in the exercise of reasonable diligence, should have known about the defect; the City failed to take reasonable steps in a reasonable amount of time to repair, correct, or remedy the defect; and the defect was a substantial proximate cause of the event or injury. Claims for damages must be filed in writing within 45 days of the event.

*If you wish to receive a copy of Public Act 222 or to file a claim for damages due to a sanitary sewer main problem, you can contact the City of Grand Rapids Office of Risk Management at 616-456-3467 or visit our website at: [www.grandrapidsmi.gov](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov)*