

Dear Homeowner:

Frequently, heavy rainstorms have generated numerous complaints from residents concerning cellar flooding and sewer backups. In most of these cases the elimination of the flooding is relatively simple and inexpensive.

In an effort to assist our residents to correct their problems, we are distributing the attached circular to various neighborhoods throughout Woodbridge Township.

We hope that this circular will provide you with the information needed to correct your problem. In addition, should you need any further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact myself, or our Municipal Engineer, Scott Lee Thompson, P.E. at (732) 602-6047.

We are aware that despite our many efforts, there are still some homes in the community that have drainage and sanitary sewer problems. With this in mind, we have prepared this information packet addressing the common problems regarding cellar drainage, sanitary sewage and illegal connections.

Section I suggests a remedy for the inconvenience resulting from improper cellar drainage. A number of homes in the Township have water in the cellar during or after a rainstorm. Our clay soil and high water table make it virtually impossible to prevent some water from entering a cellar.

Section II deals with many of the problems associated with sewer backups. These issues are currently being handled by the Township. However, some may continue to exist before achieving a solution. It is essential that the homeowner protects himself from such problems. Generally, the remedies are relatively inexpensive and usually the expense involved is less than the damage caused by a single backup.

Section III outlines the illegal connections that cause prohibited discharges into the sanitary sewer system. This creates an excessive flow that is unable to be handled by treatment facilities. Both the Middlesex County Utilities Authority and the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority are requesting that Woodbridge Township take measures to eliminate this problem. This costly excess is primarily caused by rainwater that infiltrates the sanitary sewer through the improper connections. As of July 1, 1998, Woodbridge Township has implemented an aggressive building inspection program that will investigate for prohibited discharges as well as proper functioning smoke detectors. These inspections will be administered to all residential properties at re-sale. To ensure full cooperation, these homes must pass both inspections before granted a Certificate of Continued Approval.

SECTION I

FAULTY CELLAR DRAINAGE*1. WATER IN BASEMENT AFTER RAINSTORM****INSTALL SUMP PUMP***

The proper way to get rid of cellar drainage is to use a sump pump. A sump pump is a device that pumps stormwater that has accumulated in, around, or below the foundation. This water should discharge out to the street or to a splashblock. *See figure 1.* A length of plastic PVC pipe or rubber hose will readily carry the water to the street. It should never be discharged to a sink or any other opening into the sanitary sewer. If the home is not equipped with a sump pump and the homeowner desires to install one, then the pump can be placed in either a sump pit or a depression at the sanitary sewer trap. In a few instances it may be necessary to make a hole in the cellar floor to accommodate the pump.

SECTION II

SANITARY SEWER BACKUPS*1. SEWAGE BACKING UP THROUGH THE CELLAR FLOOR DRAIN****PLUG IT PERMANENTLY.***

Cellar floor drains are not permitted in any dwelling within the Township. This is a prohibited discharge into the sanitary sewer. Use a good tight plug that either you or your plumber can install for a few dollars. *Note figure 2.* Install it a few inches below the floor and cover it with concrete. Remember sewer gas can be lethal. A cellar drain which permits drainage to flow to the sanitary sewer is an opening that can let sanitary sewage or toxic gas back into the cellar. Thus, by permanently sealing a floor drain, one prevents sewage backups and eliminates illegal connections to the sanitary sewer. Furthermore, if the sewage continues to enter through other areas, consider a backflow preventer valve. *Refer to items 3, 4, & 5, below.*

*2. SEWAGE BACKING UP THROUGH THE SANITARY SEWER TRAP****INSTALL TIGHT, SOLID CAPS.***

The Township requires that all trap caps be intact and secure. These openings are not permitted to drain your cellar. If they have holes, cracks and/or do not screw tight, replace them with new ones. *Note figure 2.* A house with a prohibited discharge/connection causes its own sanitary sewer backup problem. If further backups occur, there may be a need for the installation of a backflow preventer valve. *Refer to items 3, 4, & 5, below.*

3. SEWAGE BACKING UP THROUGH TOILETS, SINKS, TUBS, OR SHOWER DRAINS***INSTALL BACKFLOW PREVENTER VALVE.***

A backflow preventer valve will stop the sewage from returning to the home. Contact your plumber for information on cost and proper location. The advantage of a good, well-maintained backflow preventer valve is that it will operate unattended. It does not require manual turning, and will close tight in the event of a sewage backup.

4. SEWAGE BACKS UP INTO A UTILITY SINK/BASIN/WASH TUB***INSTALL VALVE.***

A backflow preventer valve can be installed, but a manual on/off valve is a suitable substitute for an infrequently used utility wash tub. This can be placed in the drain line and should be quite inexpensive.

5. SEWAGE BACKS UP IN THE DRAIN STONE AROUND THE TRAP***INSTALL VALVE.***

There may be an opening in the sewer, possibly under the cellar slab. Dig around the stone in the trap and try to locate the hole. Once found, install a durable plug. If the opening cannot be found, the install a backwater preventer valve. ***Refer to item #3.***

SECTION III**ILLEGAL CONNECTIONS****Prohibited Discharges into the Sanitary Sewers**

1. Roof drains (gutters, leaders, downspouts)
2. Floor drains (basement, foundation)
3. Sump pumps
4. Yard and driveway drains
5. Sanitary sewer trap caps (missing, loose, cracked, holes)

1. ROOF DRAINS

The Township prohibits any stormwater discharge from downspouts to be connected to the sanitary sewer system. If a house has a connection of this type, it must be plugged permanently. ***Refer to figure 1.*** The above ground downspout must be disconnected from the existing below ground drain that leads into the sanitary sewer system. Plug the underlying drain with newspaper and fill the bell housing with concrete. It is now important to redirect the water away from the foundation. This can easily be done using a splashblock or by connecting the downspout to a PVC pipe that redirects the stormwater flow from the house to the street.

2. CELLAR FLOOR DRAINS

All homes in the Township are prohibited to have cellar floor drains. They must be sealed permanently. This topic has been covered in the preceding section. ***Refer to Section II, item #1*** for more information.

3. SUMP PUMPS

The Township requires that all sump pumps discharge out to the street and not to the sanitary sewer. This topic has been discussed in a preceding section. ***Refer to Section I, item #1*** for more information.

4. YARD AND DRIVEWAY DRAINS

Under no circumstances should this water be discharged to the sanitary sewer. Yard or driveway drains should discharge out to the street. This can be easily done by installing an approved underground piping system that leads to the curb. Any opening that permits drainage to flow to the sanitary sewer should be closed permanently with a good tight plug and sealed with some concrete.

5. TRAP CAPS

Caps are to be of solid state with adequate threading that provides an impervious seal. Otherwise, they must be replaced. This topic has been explained in the preceding section. ***Refer to Section II, item #2*** for more information.

This circular has provided information that will help alleviate faulty cellar drainage, reduce sewer backups, eliminate illegal connections, decrease the volume of stormwater entering the system, and lower the cost of treatment to the users.

We also offer you the services of the Township's Division of Engineering, which can be reached at (732) 602-6047. If you are unable to call and would like to write a letter, please address it to:

Township of Woodbridge
Division of Engineering
1 Main Street
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

DO YOU HAVE AN ILLEGAL CONNECTION INTO THE SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM?

Generally, sewer backups occur during rainstorms because sewers are too overloaded to take the flow. This extraneous flow is expensive because treatment facilities are not designed to handle this type of overload. Both the Middlesex County Utilities Authority and the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority are requesting that Woodbridge Township take measures to eliminate this problem. This costly excess is primarily caused by rainwater that infiltrates the sanitary sewer through illegal connections. Despite our many efforts, there are still some homes in the community that have illegal drainage into the wastewater collection system. With this in mind, we have prepared the following list, descriptions, and remedies that will assist homeowners in eliminating these problems before inspection in order to obtain a Certificate of Approval from the township. Sanitary sewer problems are generally caused by a few reasons. All are able to be cured.

Prohibited Discharges into the Sanitary Sewers

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2. Floor drains (basement, foundation)
3. Sump pumps
4. Yard and driveway drains
5. Sanitary sewer trap caps (missing, loose, cracked, holes)

1. ROOF DRAINS

No stormwater discharge from downspouts may be connected to the sanitary sewer system. If a house has a connection of this type, it must be plugged permanently. Refer to **figure 1**. The above ground downspout must be disconnected from the existing below ground drain that leads into the sanitary sewer system. Then plug the underlying drain with newspaper and fill the bell housing with concrete. It is now important to redirect the water away from the foundation. This can be done using a splashblock or by connecting the downspout to a PVC pipe that redirects the stormwater flow from the house to the street.

2 . FLOOR DRAINS

All homes in the township are not permitted to have cellar floor drains. Use a good tight plug that either you or your plumber can install for a few dollars. Note **figure 2**. Install it a few inches below the floor and cover it with concrete. Remember sewer gas can be lethal. A floor drain which permits drainage to flow to the sanitary sewer, is an opening that can let sanitary sewage or toxic gas back into the cellar. Furthermore, if the cellar still has water entering it after a rainfall, there may be a need for the installation of a sump pump to discharge this water. Refer to item # 3 (Sump Pumps) below.

3. SUMP PUMPS

A sump pump is a device that pumps stormwater that has accumulated in, around, or below the foundation. This water should discharge out to the street or to a splashblock. See **figure 1**. A length of plastic PVC pipe or rubber hose will readily carry the water to the street. It should never be discharged to a sink or any other opening into the sanitary sewer. If the home is not equipped with a sump pump and the home owner desires to install one, then the pump can be placed in either a sump pit or a depression at the sanitary sewer trap. In a few instances it may be necessary to make a hole in the cellar floor to accommodate the pump.

4. YARD AND DRIVEWAY DRAINS

Under no circumstances should this water be discharged to the sanitary sewer. Yard or driveway drains should discharge out to the street. This can be easily done by installing an approved underground piping system that leads to the curb. Any opening that permits drainage to flow to the sanitary sewer should be closed permanently with a good tight plug and sealed with some concrete.

5. TRAP CAPS

Sanitary sewer trap caps should not be missing or defective. If they have holes, cracks and/or do not screw tight, replace them with new ones. These openings are not permitted to drain your cellar. Note **figure 2**. There may be a need for the installation of a sump pump to discharge this water. Refer to item # 3 (Sump Pumps).

These requirements will help reduce sewer backups, eliminate illegal connections, decrease the volume of stormwater entering the system, and lower the cost of treatment to the users.

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