

What Questions Should I ask the Service Provider?

We recommend having all questions answered in legible writing at the time of service with the provider's signature and date.

Where is the Blockage?

If you have your line serviced by a service provider, have them write down the specific footage where the blockage was found, or where they think it is. Also have this provider mark the spot on the ground. This information is helpful to determine in the problem is within the City's area of responsibility (see inside of brochure for drawing). It can also be helpful if the pipe must be dug up to be repaired.

What is Causing the Problem?

Have the service provider write down what the probable cause of the blockage is. Identifying the type of blockage is helpful in determining what method should be used to open it, as well as determining if regular maintenance of your side sewer is needed to prevent further back-ups or related problems.

Should I Have a Service Provider Use a TV Camera to See Blockage in Service Line?

Generally, this is not an effective method of determining what the blockage in your service line is. TV cameras usually cannot see under water, so if a service line is blocked and not draining, it won't be able to see inside your pipes. Camera inspections are most useful after the blockage has been cleared to determine the current condition of your pipes and where future problems might turn up.

Can I Do Repairs Myself?

Unclogging a Line: A variety of tools and products can be found at your local home improvement store. Portable roter machines are available at many rental companies. You'll need to measure the distance between your side-sewer and the City's main line in order to determine what size machine to rent.

[More on "Can I Do Repairs Myself", inside this brochure...](#)

Helpful Hints

City of Tacoma Wastewater Management

The City of Tacoma maintains more than 700 miles of sewer lines.

Wastewater crews are available 24 hours a day to respond to sewer and storm problems with City lines and service.

However, most of these problems homeowners face are found in the sewer line that connects their house to the City's main line.

This private line (commonly referred to as a "side sewer" or a "lateral sewer") is the homeowner's area of responsibility.

This fact sheet is intended to help you discover where the problem with your sewer service is and how to resolve as soon as possible. It is the City's mission to provide customers with an efficient, cost-effective and professionally maintained sanitary and storm water collection system.



City of Tacoma - Environmental Services

Operations and Maintenance Transmission Division
Business Hours: 7:00 am – 3:30 pm
253-591-5585 (Phone service available 24 hours)

Troubleshooting your

Sewer Problem

Call the City if...

Call the City immediately if sewage is coming up inside your home when you are not using water. Wastewater crews will check the City sewer system serving your area and will send a maintenance crew if needed. The crew will notify you of the results as soon as possible. Wastewater maintenance crews are responsible for maintaining the City's main sewer lines, to the bottom of the side sewer's "top-bend", but not the side sewer itself.



Tree roots are a common cause of clogged side-sewer lines. Roots can easily penetrate pipes through means of cracks, defects and connection joints.

Modern side-sewer lines are made of heavy duty, water-tight plastic and therefore last much longer.



Operations & Maintenance

Sewer Transmission

Wastewater & Surface Water Systems

24hr / 7 Days a Week

253-591-5585

For translations, scan here:



¿Necesita esta información en español?

Quý vị có cần nhận được thông tin này bằng tiếng Việt không?

이 정보자료가 한국어로 필요한가요?

Вам нужна эта информация на русском?

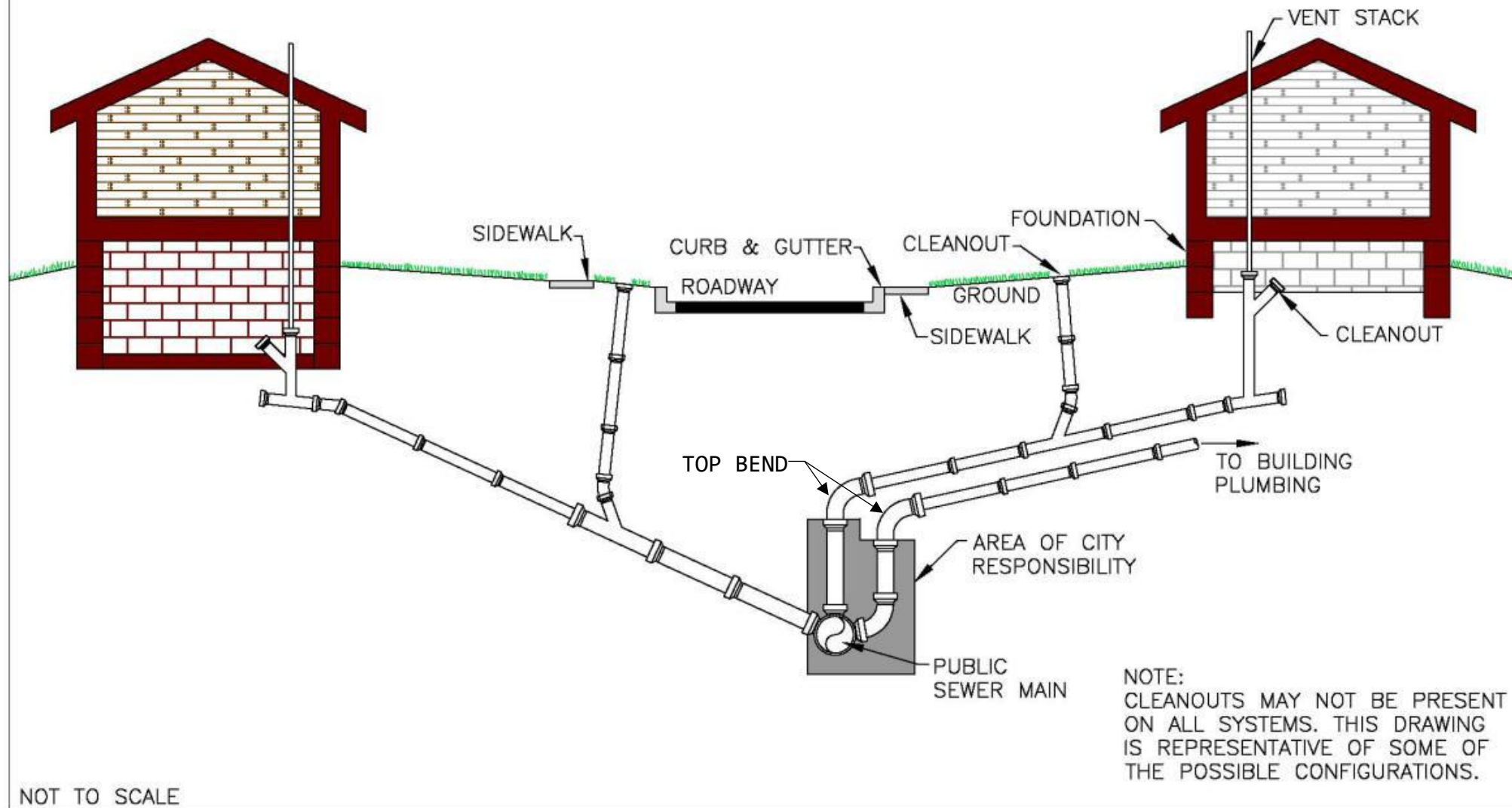
Чи потрібна вам ця інформація українською мовою?

Kailangan ba ninyo ang impormasyong ito sa Tagalog?

តើអ្នកត្រូវការព័ត៌មាននេះ ជាភាសាខ្មែរ ឬទេ?

您需要这些消息以简体中文提供吗?

CITY OF TACOMA SIDE SEWER AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY



Can I Do Repairs Myself? (Continued...)

Repairing or Replacing a Broken or Leaky Side Sewer-Line:

You may work on your own private sewer system however, the City requires you to get a permit so wastewater maintenance crews can keep track of work that may affect the City's main line and area of responsibility. Permits are available at;

City of Tacoma Building and Land Use Department, 747 Market St Room 345, during business hours; Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Call 253-591-5030 for more information.

How do I know where my side sewer is and where it hooks into the City's main line?

Check your house plans for side sewer locations or call the previous owner. You may also try accessing the permit records kept by; *City of Tacoma Building and Land Use Department, 253-591-5030.*

Unfortunately, the City has very little information on buildings before 1950. Also, if previous work on your side-sewer was done without a permit, the city will not have record of it.

Low-Interest Loans Available

The City offers low-interest loans to qualified businesses and homeowners for side-sewer service line repair and replacement. **Call (253) 502-2255** for more information.

Which Private Service Provider Do I Call?

Companies offer a full range of services including unblocking, repairing and replacing lines or pipe, however some specialize only in certain areas. Make sure to ask which services they provide. You can check with the Better Business Bureau (BBB) at 206-431-222 or BetterBusinessBureau.org to find reputable companies, and you might also want to ask friends and relatives for recommendations. Since companies offer a wide range of prices, it is a good idea to get at least three written estimates before choosing a company.

Rooter Services: Drain cleaners or "rooters", unclog plumbing and private side sewers using water pressure or mechanical "snakes". Make sure the roofer service's snake cable is long enough to reach from your side sewer to the City's main sewer line (typically located underneath the street or alley). Rooter companies may also repair and/or replace side sewers.

Side Sewer Contractors: Side sewer contractors repair and/or replace structural problems such as breaks or holes in side sewers. Some contractors may also unclog lines.

Plumbers: Plumbers repair leaky or broken fixtures and they install systems in new construction and remodeling. If only some of your fixtures are not draining, or if your pipes are leaking, a plumber may be able to remedy the problem.

Call a PRIVATE Service Provider if... you have slow drainage or you suspect a blockage. The problem is likely in your side sewer line.

However, if the worker is unable to unblock the line and you are still having problems with your sewer system, call the City before you incur any more expenses.

What if the Problem Lies in My Private Side-Sewer Service Line Within the City Right-of-Way?

All activity in the City Right-of-Way must be done by a contractor who is licensed and bonded to work in the City of Tacoma. Check you available resources under "Sewer Contractors"