



## **Private Sewer Lateral FAQs**

### **What is a private sewer lateral?**

The private sewer lateral is the pipe that connects a business or home's plumbing system to the City's wastewater collection main pipeline. The lateral is considered the "private" segment when it is located on private property and serves the purposes of an individual, privately-owned building.

### **Who owns the private lateral in the City street right-of-way?**

The property owner is responsible for entire pipe length, including the wye or saddle at the point of connection to the City's mainline.

### **Who is responsible for maintaining and repairing laterals?**

Property owners are responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of their lateral. The City is responsible for the mainline in the street.

When immediate action is necessary to preserve or protect the public health, safety, and/or the environment, the City may have to step in and take corrective action.

### **What should I do if I have problems with my sewer lateral?**

Call a licensed Plumber to determine the problem. Look for "Plumbing Contractors" in the Yellow Pages.

### **Will my homeowner's insurance pay for repairs?**

Probably not. Most policies do not cover lateral repair cost. This is a home maintenance expense.

### **What is a cleanout and where is it located?**

A cleanout is an entry point into the sewer service that is used to clear the line of any obstruction. Generally, a cleanout can be located either inside or outside of a house/building. Cleanouts are sometimes inadvertently buried under landscaping and cement. When this happens, the cleanout will need to be re-exposed and made accessible.

A licensed Plumber can determine where your sewer lateral's cleanout is and the condition of your lateral as well as perform the necessary repair work. The best way to access the condition of a lateral is by Closed Circuit Television Video (CCTV) examination.

### **What causes sewer laterals to overflow?**

Sewer laterals can be clogged and overflow for a variety of reasons:

- Tree and/or brush roots wrapping around the sewer line
- Disposal of items into sink and/or toilet that clog the drain:
  - Feminine hygiene items, including tampons and pads
  - Baby wipes and diapers



- Paper towels
- Hair
- Dental floss
- Disposable towels
- Foods not meant for the garbage disposal such as chicken bones, corn cobs and egg shells
- Cooking grease
- Children's toys

All food scraps and non-dissolvable items should be thrown in a trash or compost bin instead of down the drain. Kitchen cooking grease should never be thrown down the drain. Instead, cooking grease should be kept in a tin or glass jar and then thrown in the garbage.

### **How often should my lateral be cleaned?**

To avoid costly repairs as well as health, safety, and environmental hazards, laterals should be cleaned regularly. How often you clean your lateral depends on the age of your house, the growth of tree and brush roots and the types of items that go down the drain.

A good rule of thumb is to have a plumber check your lateral every two to five years. Check more often if you experience a sewage-like odor or frequent clogged drains.

### **How do I know if my lateral needs repair or replacement?**

Some signs that a lateral may need repair or replacement include frequent clogged drains and an odor of sewage. Houses and businesses with mature trees and bushes may need to check and repair their laterals more often since roots may wrap around and damage the lateral.

The best way to assess the condition of a lateral is by Closed Circuit television Video (CCTV) examination.

Possible deficiencies that may be detected include displaced joints, open joints, root intrusion, substantial deterioration of the line, cracks, leaks, inflow, infiltration of extraneous water, fats, oils and grease, or sediment deposits.

### **Do I need a City permit to do lateral repair work on my property?**

Yes, you do need a permit to perform lateral work on private property. A plumbing permit for lateral repairs/replacement is issued over-the-counter to licensed Plumbers at Ventura City Hall, Room 117 between the hours of 7:30-5:00 M-F. (City Hall is closed alternating Fridays.)

### **How far away from my lateral should I plant trees and bushes, so that the roots don't damage my lateral?**

The distance of trees and shrubs varies, depending on the type of plant and the surrounding soil condition.