

# **Lateral Line/Building Sewer**

## **A Guide to Your Private Sewer Line**

### **What is a lateral line/building sewer?**

The lateral line (also referred to as a “building sewer”) connects your home or building to the public sewer system, the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (“MSD”). The lateral line generally connects to a mainline sewer pipe in the right-of-way. Wastewater from your sinks, showers, toilets, dishwashers and washing machines flows through the lateral line to the public sewer system.

### **Who is responsible for maintaining and repairing the lateral line?**

The lateral line is private property. It is the property owners' responsibility to maintain and repair the lateral line.

It's important to keep the lateral line clear of obstructions and in good repair. This will greatly reduce the risk of blockages, clogs, and backups.

As a means to protect other utilities within the right-of-way, and to relieve the home owner/customer of what could be costly repairs within the right-of-way, MSD will make repairs to failed laterals within the right-of-way. However, lateral repairs outside of the right-of-way are the responsibility of the property owner. The responsibility for identifying the issue with the pipe and notifying MSD of a lateral failure is that of the property owner. See “How do I get the lateral line repaired” below.

### **What causes lateral lines to become blocked or obstructed?**

Lateral lines can be blocked or obstructed by items flushed down the toilet or washed down the drain, as well as tree roots, grease, and other obstructions.

### **How do I know if my lateral line is blocked or damaged?**

Some signs that your lateral is blocked or damaged include slow draining, water pooling around the basement floor drains, sewage smell inside or outside the building, wastewater leaking from cleanouts, and wet ground in your yard.

# **Is insurance available to cover repairs to my lateral line?**

Most homeowners'/business owners' insurance policies do not cover damages caused by a problem with the lateral line. You should verify coverage with your insurance agent.

Many area municipalities offer lateral line insurance for their residents. This insurance helps offset the cost of repairing lateral lines. If you would like more information regarding lateral insurance programs, we suggest you contact your insurance company or your local municipal government to see if they offer any lateral line insurance programs.

## **How do I get the lateral line repaired?**

If you do not qualify for a municipal lateral line insurance program, then you should contact a licensed professional plumber. The first step is to determine if the problem resides in the right-of-way or in your yard. The determination is generally done by a licensed plumber. If the problem is located in your yard (outside of the public right-of-way), you will need to hire a contractor or plumber to make the repair. MSD cannot offer any plumber or specific company recommendations.

If the issue is located within the right-of-way and is a result of a failed lateral that needs to be repaired as determined by your plumber, contact MSD to get the repair initiated. MSD will typically verify the plumber's determination of the failed lateral location before work is initiated. Once the failed lateral location has been determined, MSD will schedule and perform the work.

## **How do I maintain the lateral line?**

- Have the lateral line inspected annually and cleaned as needed by a licensed plumber.
- Do not plant trees or large shrubs near the lateral line. Roots can enter the lateral line and cause a blockage. If roots enter your lateral line, call a licensed plumber to clear the line.
- Do not pour grease down the sink. When grease cools, it can build up in the lateral line and cause a blockage. Do not flush diapers, feminine hygiene products or other non-toilet paper materials down the toilet. These items can block the lateral line.
- In some areas, downspouts are connected to the lateral line. Debris from the roof can wash into the gutters and eventually reach the lateral line. Keep gutters clean to keep debris from blocking the lateral line. Remove downspout connections from the lateral line and discharge to your yard.
- Repair or replace damaged lateral lines as soon as possible.