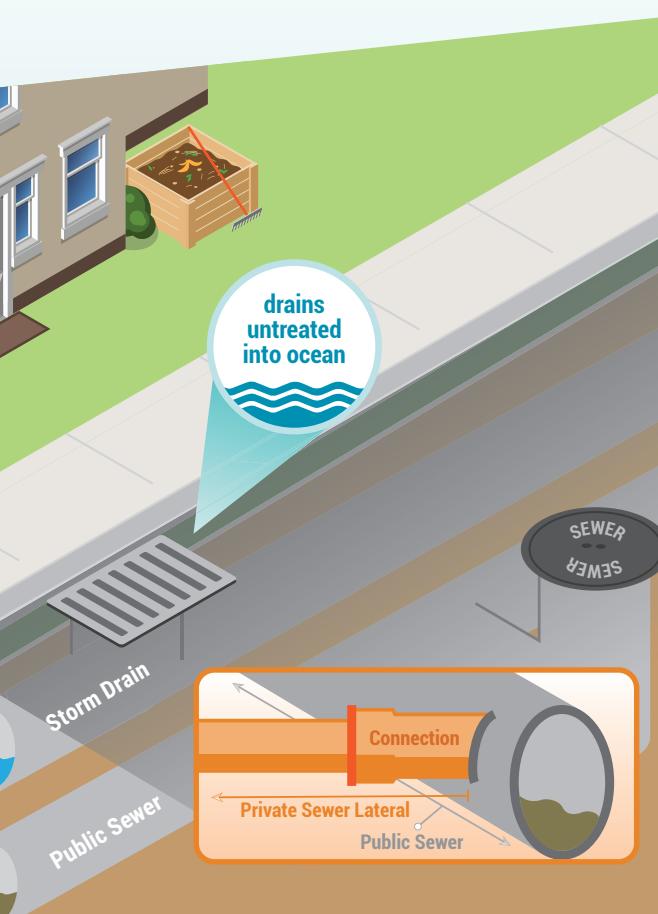


## Sewer System Maintenance

Property owners are responsible for maintaining their private laterals from the connection at the home or business to the connection with the public sewer; this can include areas under the sidewalk and the street. Inadequate maintenance of laterals can result in sewer backups and spills. Operation and maintenance of the local, public, and regional sewer lines, on the other hand, are the responsibility of the sewer agency.\* Visit the link inside for agency contact information.



## Who is H<sub>2</sub>OC?

**H<sub>2</sub>OC is YOU!** H<sub>2</sub>OC is also a cooperative stormwater program which includes all 34 cities in Orange County, the County of Orange, and Orange County Flood Control District (OCFCD). Clean and healthy beaches, creeks, rivers, bays, wetlands, and ocean are important to Orange County. H<sub>2</sub>OC provides resources to residents and businesses to encourage personal action and prevent polluted runoff from entering our waterways.

Visit [h2oc.org](http://h2oc.org) to learn more.

## Contact

**City of Laguna Niguel**  
30111 Crown Valley Pkwy  
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

**Public Works** (949-362-4337)  
[works@cityoflagunaniguel.org](mailto:works@cityoflagunaniguel.org)

**Community Development** (949-362-4300)  
[code@cityoflagunaniguel.org](mailto:code@cityoflagunaniguel.org)

**24-Hour Pollution Reporting Hotline:**  
1-877-89-SPILL (1-877-897-7455)

**24-hour Reporting Website:**  
[myOCeServices.ocgov.com](http://myOCeServices.ocgov.com)

For emergencies, dial 911

# HOW TO PREVENT & REPORT SEWAGE SPILLS

A PROPERTY OWNER'S GUIDE TO PRIVATE SEWER LATERALS



Developed in Collaboration with Orange County's Sewer Agencies

## The Sanitary Sewer System

Every property with sewer service owns a private sewer line, also known as a "private lateral." The private lateral carries wastewater from indoor plumbing fixtures, like toilets, sinks, and dishwashers, to the public sewer line under the street. The sewer system transports wastewater to treatment plants before being released. It is important to maintain your private laterals to prevent sewage spills that can reach our storm drains. Unlike water in sanitary sewers, water that flows into storm drains is **not treated** before entering our waterways and should never contain sewage.



## Backups and Sewage Spills

Sewage spills and backups occur when the wastewater being transported is blocked and overflows or leaks out of broken pipes inside or outside of your building. Once out of the pipe, the sewage can discharge to the curb, gutter, and storm drain system, which flows to local waterways. Sewage spills can cause health hazards, beach closures, damage to homes and businesses, and threaten the quality of our local waterways. As a property owner, if sewage from your property discharges to a gutter or storm drain, you may be subject to fines, penalties, or increased rates.

## Common Causes

### BLOCKAGES

Common causes of blockages include

- Flushing anything other than toilet paper, including: wipes (even those advertised as "flushable"), feminine products, rags, and other items.
- Fats, oils, and grease (FOG) can get into the private lateral from household drains, as well as from poorly maintained commercial grease traps and interceptors.
- Tree roots can find their way into cracked or broken sewer laterals and cause blockages.

### STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

Common structural problems include

- Broken/cracked pipes.
- Deteriorated, missing, or broken cleanout caps.
- Aging or undersized sewers.

## Keep Your Private Laterals Functioning Properly

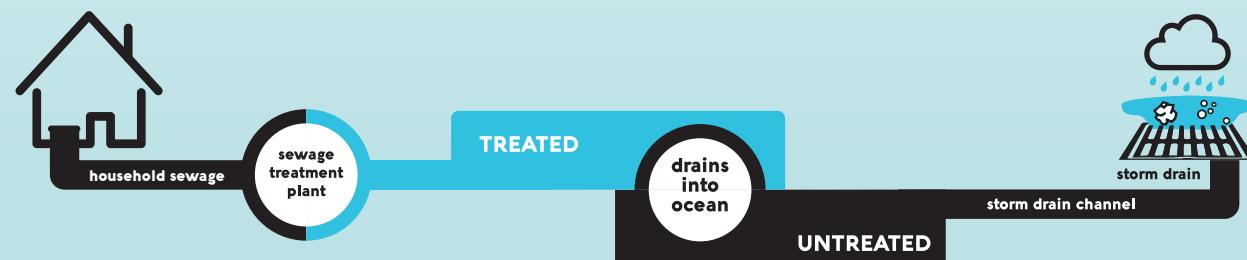
### Prevent Blockages

Remember, **the drain is not a dump!**

- Only flush toilet paper down the toilet.
- Use a mesh sink strainer to catch food scraps before they go down the drain.
- Scrape food scraps into a designated food waste/organics receptacle before rinsing dishes and utensils in the sink.
- After cooking at home, let grease cool then pour or scrape it into a metal can. When the can is full, dispose of grease properly.
- For businesses, grease traps or interceptors must be serviced regularly. Have spill kits readily available for cleaning up spills.
- Do not plant trees or large shrubs above or within several feet of your sewer laterals.

### Structural Maintenance

- Contact a licensed plumber to determine the optimal maintenance schedule.
- Perform periodic cleaning to eliminate grease, debris, and roots from private laterals.
- Repair or replace deteriorated or damaged private laterals as soon as possible.
- Install a backflow device to prevent sewage from ending up in your home or business.



## Identify & Report Sewage Spills or Backups

### Know the Signs

Sewage spills can cause damage to your property, the environment, and our local waterways. Look for potential signs of a spill, which may include:

- Drains are operating slower than normal and continuing to slow over time.
- Drains backup inside of buildings.
- Unusually wet or soggy ground in your yard that may be accompanied by odors.
- Leakage from sewer cleanouts, outside drains, or manhole lids.

### Report Sewage Spills Immediately

- If you suspect a sewer backup or leak, contact a licensed plumber.
- If you observe a sewer spill from a cleanout or manhole, contact your sewer agency.\*
- Plumbers should contact the sewer agency prior to pushing roots from private sewer laterals to the sewer main.

Alternatively, you can contact the **24-Hour Pollution Reporting Hotline** by calling **1-877-89-SPILL (1-877-897-7455)** or visiting [myOCeServices.ocgov.com](http://myOCeServices.ocgov.com).

## Spill Control & Containment

- Turn off main water supply or stop all water use.
- Have a plumbing professional clear the blockage and make necessary repairs.
- Keep people and pets away from the affected area.
- When safe, place sandbags or other material in the flow path of the spill to control, contain, and prevent sewage from entering the storm drain system.



Sewer overflow



Plumber making repairs on private lateral

