

Wastewater Division General Information

If you experience a sewer problem, please call (843) 795-2345 and state that you are reporting a sewer problem with a stopped up sewer line, sewer odor, overflowing manhole or lift station.

What is a Sewer Lateral?

A sewer lateral (often called a sewer service) is the pipeline between the James Island Public Service District (JIPSD) sanitary sewer main, and the building. The sewer lateral is owned and maintained by the property owner. The cause of a backup in your lateral is usually from items in the line that are not meant to be there, such as children's toys, underwear, towels, diapers or paper products (not toilet paper). What you flush down your toilet may not affect you, but it might cause problems for your neighbors! Another possible cause would be roots or grease in your lateral. When having a drainage problem inside the building / residence if, all other drains are working and one is not then the problem is normally in the indoor plumbing.

If the problem is in the sewer lateral, the homeowner or business is responsible for correcting the problem. Each customer/owner is responsible for the normal routine maintenance and inspection of the sanitary sewer service line serving the property from the building to the point where it connects to the JIPSD main sewer. In cases where the customer or customer's plumber cannot clear the line outside of the customer's property by normal sewer rodding methods or it becomes necessary to replace the noted portion of service line, JIPSD will assume responsibility for major maintenance, repair, or replacement of that applicable portion of the sewer service from JIPSD sewer main to the point it crosses onto the owner's property. Each customer/owner is required at his expense to repair/replace the domestic sanitary sewer service if found defective by the JIPSD during inspections of the sanitary sewer system.

REMEMBER TO CALL JIPSD before calling a plumber if all your drains are stopped up. We will check the sewer main and let you know what we find. If the problem is not in the JIPSD main you will be advised that the problem is yours.

If the problem is in the sewer lateral, whom do you call for help?

You will need to call a plumber. Check your Yellow Pages or Business White Pages. JIPSD cannot make a recommendation. It may be in your best interest to obtain several estimates.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT BACKUPS IN YOUR LATERAL OR IN THE JIPSD MAIN?

You can do many things to prevent your lateral from backing up. Remember that the very same things can help to prevent backups in the JIPSD main as well. If everyone would be careful about how they dispose of certain products, our systems would be more efficient, cause fewer backups, and cost us all less money.

Grease: PLEASE DO NOT POUR OR DISCHARGE ANY TYPE OF FATS, OILS OR GREASE IN YOUR DRAIN. Put it in the trash after it cools. Some people assume that washing grease down the drain with hot water works. This is not true. Grease goes down the drain, cools off and solidifies either in your drain, the lateral line, or in the main sewer. The line will constrict and will stop up.

Roots: Plants will seek water and find their way into sewer line cracks. Roots can cause extensive damage. They start out small, getting into a small crack in the pipe; but as the plant grows so does the root. One way to prevent roots from entering your line is to replace the line with new plastic pipe. The other alternative is to be careful about planting greenery around your sewer line. If you have continuing problems with tree roots in your lateral, you may have to have them cut periodically by a plumber.

Paper Products: Paper towels, disposable (and cloth) diapers, and feminine products cause many of the problems in the lateral as well as in the JIPSD main. They do not deteriorate quickly, like toilet paper. They become stuck in the lateral/main, causing a sewer backup. These products should also be disposed of in the trash.

Sewer Odor: Another problem a property owner may have is that they can smell sewer odors inside their house or building. There are many ways to prevent this from occurring. Under each drain in your plumbing system, there is a "P-Trap". If there is water in this P-Trap, odors or gasses from the sewer cannot enter through the drain. Periodically check to make sure that unused floor drains, sinks etc. have water in the "P-trap". Another way to prevent sewer odor is to ensure that the vents, which are located on your roof, are free from bird nests, leaves, etc. When these vents are clear, the sewer odors will escape through these vents.

Needles: Please do not flush needles or other sharp items into wastewater collection system. The presence of these needles in the wastewater collection system presents special and possibly deadly problems for wastewater collection employees.

Manholes: Do not open or enter any JIPSD manholes. Please do not put anything inside of a manhole. Please do not cover or bury a manhole. The cover for the manhole must remain visible so that when a stoppage occurs maintenance personnel can find the manhole quickly to perform their maintenance and to prevent possible property damage. If you see anyone not associated with JIPSD opening a city manhole, please notify JIPSD or the Police Department immediately. If you see sewage surcharging from a manhole, please contact JIPSD.

Illegal Plumbing Connections: Do not connect rain gutter down spouts, sump pumps and other flood control systems to your sanitary sewer. It is illegal, and debris and silt will clog your line. Consult a plumber to correct any illegal connections.

SEWER LIFT STATION GENERAL INFORMATION

There are 62 sewer lift stations in the JIPSD's system. Sewer lift stations pump sewage "uphill" to the collection system 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Sanitary sewage must pass through the collection system pipes to the wastewater treatment plant by gravity sewer. When a lift station has a malfunction a red light will be flashing on the station. Call the JIPSD at (843) 795-2345 and state that you are reporting a sewer problem with a lift station. During times when there is a power outage in your area we ask that you limit your sewer use to prevent sewer overflows. Not all of our lift stations have back up electric power generators and have limited storage capacity. Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.