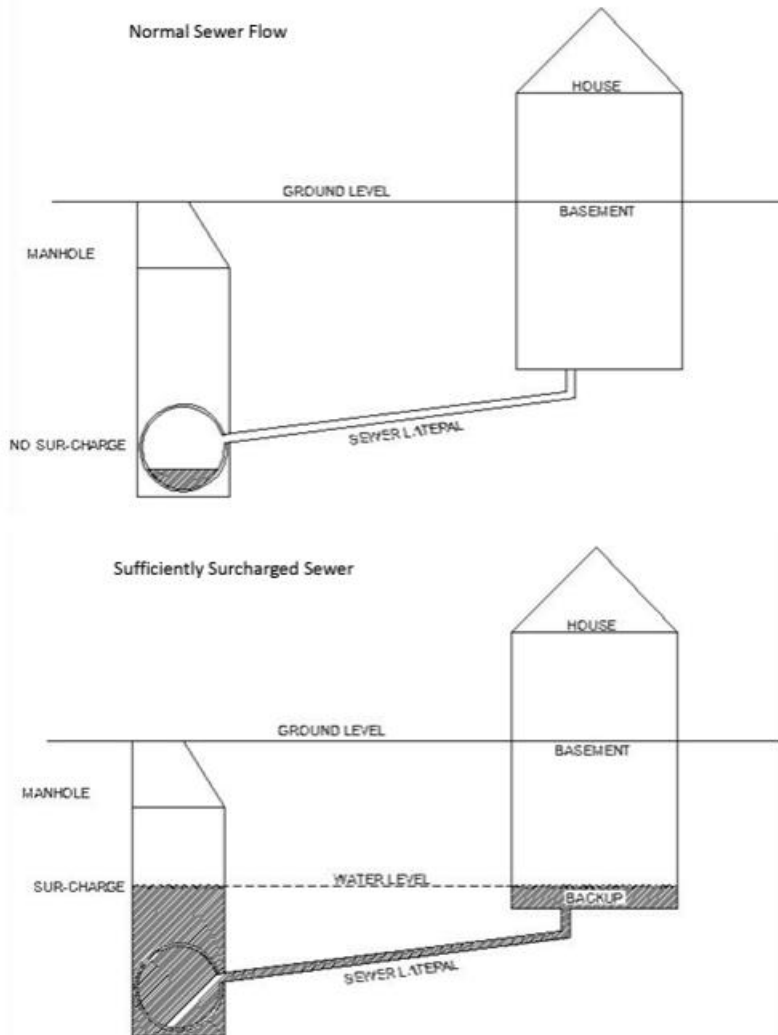


UNDERSTANDING SEWER SURCHARGE – WATER IN BASEMENTS

Heavy rain – and sometimes melting snow – can result in a situation where there is too much water for the sewer pipes to carry away. The amount of water a sewer pipe can carry can be limited by the size of that pipe. Think of draining a swimming pool with a garden hose versus a fire hose.



When the design capacity of a sewer is exceeded, it is surcharged. Basement areas below the water level may backup.

If your building recently has experienced a backup for the first time, it may be because of unique storm conditions or because of increased inflow and infiltration into the sewer. Infiltration occurs when parts of the system have deteriorated, allowing groundwater to enter the sewer through holes, cracks, joint failures, and faulty connections. Water that enters through connections like gutters and uncapped sewer cleanouts is called inflow. Inflow and infiltration increase the likelihood that there will be too much water and the sewers will surcharge.

Once the rain stops, surcharged sewers are able to drain away excess water. Water that backed up into basements can recede.

The Water Board has great sympathy for property owners who experience basement backups during heavy rain or snowmelt events. Its crews work hard to maintain the sewer system so that it performs as well as possible.

However, the Water Board cannot function as insurer for all users of the sewer system or pay claims for damages that occur when basements back up because the amount of water exceeds the design capacity of the sewer pipes to carry it away. For these reasons, the Water Board strongly urges all building occupants to consider purchasing insurance policies that provide coverage for water backups.

If you experience water in your basement during dry weather, it may indicate a problem with the Water Board's sewer system. Please report the issue to the Water Board at (716) 283-9770 and we will respond as soon as possible; problems with Water Board sewer mains that impact buildings are made a priority for repair.