

**Appendix O.**  
**EMWD Sewer System Reference Guide**

# Sewer System Safety Information

## HOW EMWD'S SEWER SYSTEM OPERATES

EMWD is responsible for collecting, treating, and recycling wastewater within its 555 square mile service area. Within that area, approximately 239,000 sewer connections generate around 43 million gallons of wastewater per day!

Wastewater from homes and businesses is transported using gravity, 47 lift stations, and 1,749 miles of pipeline to one of four operating wastewater treatment facilities, also known as water reclamation facilities.

Once wastewater enters the treatment plant, it goes through preliminary and primary treatment process using screens, settling tanks and skimmers where solid material from the sewage is removed. The remaining wastewater continues through secondary treatment where it is treated biologically, and solid material is further removed through sedimentation tanks.

The wastewater finally goes through a tertiary treatment where it becomes recycled water that meets Title 22 requirement. In the tertiary process, the wastewater is filtered prior to disinfecting with chlorine that kills the pathogenic (disease causing) bacteria. Tertiary water is used for agriculture, duck clubs, landscape irrigation for golf courses, parks, cemeteries, freeway landscapes, playgrounds and schoolyards.

## PREVENTING SEWAGE SPILLS

Sewage spills occur when wastewater overflows through a manhole, cleanout pipe, or broken sewer line. Spills can cause health hazards, damage home and businesses, and threaten the local environment. Some are obvious such as wastewater flowing out from a manhole. However, others take more time to notice. Some common signs of spills include: 1) drains that backup inside a building; 2) water leaking around manhole lids; 3) water leaking from cleanouts or outside drains; and 4) septic smelling wet areas on sidewalks, on outside walls, or on the grounds/landscape area around a building.

## PROPERTY OWNER RESPONSIBILITIES

A property owner's sewer pipes are called service laterals. These service laterals connect to EMWD's large main lines. It is the property owner's responsibility to maintain and repair, if necessary, their service laterals, which can extend into the street.

Local and State agencies have legal jurisdiction and enforcement authority to ensure that sewage spills are remedied. They may respond and assist with containment, clearing pipe blockages, and/or clean up. However, a property owner may be charged for costs incurred by these agencies responding to spills from private properties.

For more information, contact one of the regulatory agencies listed on the next page.

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CAUTION! Keep people and pets away from the affected area. Untreated sewage has high levels of disease-causing viruses and bacteria.

**IF YOU SEE A SEWAGE SPILL OCCURRING, NOTIFY  
EMWD AT (951) 928-3777 EXT 6265 IMMEDIATELY!**

## Common Causes of Spills

Spills are often caused by pipeline blockages due to grease buildup, debris, or structural damage due to tree roots. Overflows may also occur when water - such as groundwater or rainwater - enters the sewer system through a broken pipe or illegal connection and compromises the capacity of the sewer pipeline. This is known as infiltration and inflow and is most likely to occur during heavy rain storms. Rain water should never be diverted into the sewer system.

## How You Can Help Prevent Blockages and Spills

1. Never put grease down garbage disposals, drains, or toilets. Mix fats, oils, and grease with absorbent waste materials like paper, coffee grounds, or kitty litter and place it in the trash. Wipe food scraps from plates and pans and dump them in the trash as well.
2. Have your sewer service lateral pipelines cleaned periodically to eliminate grease, debris, and roots from causing a blockage. Be sure to use proper chemicals to remove roots without damaging the lateral pipeline.
3. Repair any damage to your sewer service lateral pipelines that might compromise their capacity.

## REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

EMWD must report to a variety of regulatory agencies regarding matters of public health. They include:

**Riverside County Department of Environmental Health** - Enforces the California Health and Safety Code which states that no person shall discharge sewage - treated or untreated - or other waste in any manner which will result in contamination, pollution, or a nuisance. (888) 722-4234 or 24/7 emergency line at (951) 782-2968.

**Regional Water Quality Control Boards** - Requires the prevention, mitigation, and the response to and reporting of sewage spills. EMWD reports to both the Santa Ana Region and the San Diego Region. (951) 782-4130 (Santa Ana); (619) 516-1990 (San Diego).

**California Emergency Management Agency** - Enforces California Water Code and California Code of Regulations sections that pertain to reporting sewage spills into State waters. (800) 852-7550.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Allowing sewage to discharge to a gutter or storm drain may subject you to penalties and/or out-of-pocket costs to reimburse cities or public agencies for clean-up efforts.