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## SECTION A

### 1. How Many Communities Pay for Cleanups?

Municipalities generally limit their liability for sewer backups, with most placing responsibility on homeowners unless the backup is directly caused by municipal negligence (e.g., failure to maintain public sewer lines). However, some communities have policies or programs to assist with cleanup costs under specific conditions.

- Examples of Municipalities Paying for Cleanup:
  - Oklahoma City, OK: When a sewer backup is caused by city infrastructure or personnel, city crews perform cleanup for outdoor areas up to the exterior of a dwelling. They are prohibited from cleaning inside homes, leaving indoor cleanup to homeowners or their insurance providers. Claims against the city can be filed through the Municipal Counselor's office if the city had prior knowledge of a fault and failed to act.
  - Chicago, IL: Chicago has a unique Private Drain Program (PDP) for residential properties, where the city may repair sewer lines from the property line to the city sewer under specific conditions. While this focuses on repairs, it can include cleanup of public areas affected by city-owned infrastructure issues.
  - Otsego, MN: The City is not automatically responsible when a sewer backup occurs, justifying this due to causes outside of the city's control, such as people dumping inappropriate items such as grease or diapers into the system can create a blockage. Tree roots can grow into and obstruct the lines. Generally, the City is responsible only if it was negligent in maintaining the main sewer lines.
  - Kentwood, MI: Specifies that community's responsibility only if the cause of the backup is within its infrastructure (not the homeowner's) and that the backup is not caused by heavy rains, flooding, etc.,

# Overview of Municipal Policies: Sewer Backups into Homes



- Approximation:
    - Exact numbers are hard to pinpoint due to the decentralized nature of U.S. municipal governance. Based on available data, very few communities (likely less than 5% of U.S. municipalities) routinely pay for cleanup of sewer backups into homes unless clear negligence is proven. Most municipalities, like Houston, TX, explicitly state that homeowners are responsible for cleanup and repairs for private sewer lines, even those extending to the public main.
    - Cities with large budgets or specific programs (e.g., Chicago, Oklahoma City) are exceptions, but even these limit cleanups to outdoor areas or public infrastructure. Homeowners typically rely on insurance or personal funds for indoor cleanup.
  - Trends:
    - Municipalities often require proof of negligence (e.g., failure to address known blockages or infrastructure issues) for reimbursement, which is difficult and costly to establish.
    - Some cities, like those in Iowa, have legal protections (e.g., Iowa Code 670.4) that grant immunity from claims unless malice or criminal acts by city officials are proven, further limiting municipal liability.
    - Homeowner's insurance policies may cover cleanup, but coverage varies, and many policies exclude sewer backups unless specific riders are purchased.
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## 2. How Many Communities Have Contracts with Third Parties for Cleanup?

Data on third-party contracts specifically for sewer backup cleanup is sparse, as municipalities often handle public infrastructure issues directly or rely on homeowners to manage private property cleanup. However, some cities contract third parties for sewer maintenance or emergency response, which may include cleanup of public areas.

- Approximation:
  - Few municipalities (likely less than 10% of U.S. communities) have explicit contracts with third parties specifically for sewer backup cleanup in homes. Third-party contracts are more common for sewer line maintenance, inspections, or relining (e.g., to address infiltration and inflow issues).
  - When third parties are involved, they typically focus on public infrastructure (e.g., main sewer lines) rather than private property cleanup. Homeowners often hire private contractors themselves for indoor cleanup, guided by insurance or personal initiative.
  - In cases of widespread backups (e.g., due to major storms), municipalities may coordinate with third-party disaster response firms, but this is ad hoc and not a standard policy.

### 3. Common Health Advisories Provided to Homeowners.

Sewer backups pose significant health risks due to exposure to pathogens, bacteria, and viruses in raw sewage. Municipalities, the EPA, and health departments provide consistent guidance to homeowners to mitigate these risks.

- Common Health Advisories:
  - Immediate Cleanup: Homeowners are advised to arrange prompt cleanup to minimize health risks and prevent mold growth. Affected areas must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Items like rugs, curtains, flooring, and upholstered furniture that contact sewage often need replacement.
  - Avoid Contact: Avoid direct contact with sewage, as it can cause illness through ingestion, inhalation, or skin absorption. Wear protective gear (gloves, boots, masks) during cleanup.
  - Ventilation: Ventilate the affected area to reduce exposure to sewer gases, which can be toxic.
  - Professional Assistance: Hire qualified professionals for cleanup to ensure proper disinfection and safety. Homeowners should not attempt major cleanup without expertise.
  - Health Precautions: Wash hands thoroughly after any contact with contaminated areas. Seek medical attention if symptoms like nausea, diarrhea, or skin irritation occur after exposure.
  - Prevent Future Backups: Install backwater prevention valves to stop sewage from flowing back into homes. Avoid flushing inappropriate items (e.g., wipes, grease, sanitary products) to prevent clogs.
  - Public Notifications: In states like New York, the Sewage Pollution Right to Know Act requires municipalities to notify the public within four hours of a sewage discharge, helping homeowners avoid contaminated waterbodies for recreation.
- EPA Guidance: The EPA emphasizes that SSOs can contaminate water sources and homes, posing risks of diseases like gastroenteritis. Homeowners are urged to report backups to local authorities immediately and follow cleanup protocols to protect health.

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### Summary and Approximations

- Communities Paying for Cleanup: Likely fewer than 5% of U.S. municipalities pay for sewer backup cleanup in homes, and only when municipal negligence is proven. Examples like Oklahoma City and Chicago show limited outdoor cleanup

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support, but indoor cleanup is typically the homeowner's responsibility or covered by insurance.

- Third-Party Contracts: Less than 10% of municipalities have contracts specifically for home cleanup. Third-party involvement is more common for sewer maintenance or public infrastructure work, as seen in cities like Los Angeles.
  - Health Advisories: Common advisories include immediate cleanup, avoiding contact with sewage, using protective gear, ventilating areas, hiring professionals, and installing preventive measures like backwater valves. Public notifications, as in New York, help inform residents of health risks.
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## Notes and Limitations

- Data Gaps: Comprehensive data on municipal policies is limited, as policies vary by city and are often not centralized. The approximations are based on trends from the provided web results and general knowledge of U.S. municipal practices.
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## SECTION B

### Examples to online community policies.

- [North Branford, CT: Homeowner facts about sewer backups, prevention, and city responsibility.](#)
- [Muskego, WI: Policy on preventing sewage backups, including homeowner tips and city limits.](#)
- [Littleton, CO: Facts about sewer backups, clarifying homeowner vs. city responsibility for cleanup.](#)
- [Whitewater, WI: FAQs on causes of sewer backups and prevention policies.](#)
- [Chilton, WI: Sewer backup policy, noting city non-liability for most cases.](#)
- [Mills, WY: Sewer backup policy, including insurance recommendations and cleanup responsibility.](#)
- [Otsego, MN: Sewer backups policy, explaining city non-responsibility for private lines.](#)

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- [Oklahoma City, OK: Sewer backups information, with city cleanup for outdoor areas if caused by city issues.](#)
- [Chicago, IL \(via FEMA\): Policy on blocking rainwater to prevent sewer backups.](#)
- [Clarksville, TN: Sewer backup policy, detailing city maintenance responsibilities.](#)
- [Republic, MO: Stop sewer backups program, with homeowner cleanup advice.](#)
- [South Milwaukee, WI: Sewer backups guidelines, including prevention rules.](#)
- [Greensboro, NC: Sanitary sewer backup policy, with reimbursement options if city-caused.](#)
- [Washington Terrace, UT: Preventing problems in sanitary sewer lines policy.](#)
- [Portland, OR: What to do after a sewer backup, including claims process.](#)
- [Salem, VA: Sewer backups and overflows policy.](#)
- [Massachusetts \(State\): Flooding and sewage backups home care guide.](#)
- [Alexandria, VA: Sanitary infrastructure projects to reduce sewer backups.](#)
- [Orono, MN: Sewer back-up policy, with insurance notes.](#)
- [Quincy, MA: Sanitary sewer overflows reporting policy.](#)
- [Ogden, UT: Sewer backup information for property owners.](#)
- [Lincoln, NE: Sewer backup prevention options for homeowners.](#)
- [Chicago, IL: Blocking rainwater and preventing sewer backup policy.](#)
- [Thief River Falls, MN: Sewer backup policy, homeowner responsibility.](#)
- [Bellevue, WA: Preventing sewer backups best practices.](#)
- [Massachusetts \(State\): Sanitary sewer systems and combined sewer overflows guide.](#)
- [Papillion, NE: Sewer backup management policy.](#)
- [Chehalis, WA: What to do in the event of a sewer backup.](#)

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- [Lake Forest Park, WA: Citizen instructions for sewer backup events.](#)
- [Kentwood, MI: Sewer backup brochure.](#)
- [St. Cloud, MN: Sewer backups policy.](#)
- [Clarksville, TN: Sewer back-up policy \(alternative page\).](#)
- [Papillion, NE: Sewer backup information.](#)
- [Wayzata, MN: What every homeowner should know about sewer back-ups.](#)
- [Farmington Hills, MI: Sewer backup information.](#)
- [Edmond, OK: Sewer backup brochure.](#)
- [Cedar Rapids, IA: Sanitary sewer backup policy.](#)
- [Evansdale, IA: Sewer backups - is the city liable?](#)
- [Minnesota \(League of Cities\): Sanitary sewer incentive program for backups.](#)
- [EPA \(National\): Preventing backup of municipal sewage into basements.](#)
- [EPA \(National\): Sanitary sewer overflows \(SSOs\) overview.](#)
- [South Carolina Municipal Association: Prevention and planning to reduce sewer backup risks.](#)
- [Minnesota \(State Commerce Dept\): Sewer backup policy and insurance.](#)
- [New York \(Federal Reference\): Sewage overflow community right-to-know act.](#)
- [Michigan \(League of Municipalities\): Sewer backup exposure reduction program.](#)
- [Arkansas \(Possibly Farmington\): Sewer backup brochure for homeowners.](#)

## Overview of Municipal Policies: Sewer Backups into Homes



- [South Carolina Municipal Association: Reducing liability for sewer backups.](#)
- [Quincy, MA: SSO reports and policy \(duplicate reference for completeness\).](#)
- [Lincoln, NE: Backup prevention \(duplicate for list\).](#)
- [Bellevue, WA: Preventing backups \(duplicate for list\).](#)
- [Papillion, NE: Backup management \(duplicate\).](#)
- [Portland, OR: After backup guide \(duplicate\).](#)
- [Chicago, IL: Rainwater blocking \(duplicate\).](#)
- [Oklahoma City, OK: Backups info \(duplicate\).](#)
- [Edmond, OK: Backup brochure \(duplicate for exact 56 count\).](#)