

# Sewage Backup / Release

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A **backup** occurs when waste or debris has obstructed a plumbing system, resulting in clogged or slow-moving drains or toilets. In the event of a disaster, water and sewer lines may be broken and handling human waste becomes very important for health and safety. A backup usually will not cause damage if the backed-up sink or toilet remains unused until the system is cleared.

A **backflow** is much less common than a backup. It happens when water or waste materials come up through a drain or toilet when the plumbing system is not being used. This may mean that a main is blocked and wastewater is backing up into buildings. A backflow can inflict serious damage, including flooding a room or an entire floor.

Exposure to sewage or its products may result in contact with infectious agents so it is important to ensure proper safety equipment is used during response activity

## Updated

August 9, 2011

## Source

Federal Emergency Management Agency

U-M Plant Operations

## More Information

<http://www.fema.gov/>

<http://www.plantops.umich.edu/>

<http://www.oseh.umich.edu/pdf/guideline/guidfdr.pdf>

## **Prevention / Mitigation / Preparedness - Sewage Backup/ Release**

Determine how information on the event will be obtained and then delivered to building occupants. Signs may need to be posted in common gathering areas.

Establish a three deep system of personnel located in the building and provide training on how to react and handle a sewage backup /release incident.

Start with an assessment of your building to determine if backwater valves, also known as check valves, have been installed.

Educate building occupants on evacuation routes should the need arise due to flooding.

On lower levels of the building, place valuable property and electronics above flood level.

## **Response - Sewage Backup/ Release**

Keep people away from the affected area(s). Flooded areas have trip, slip and fall, electrical and other health hazards not immediately recognized.

Turn off central heat and air-conditioning systems and prevent flow from reaching floor vents by using towels or blankets as a berm. You can also remove the vent cover and stuff a towel in the opening to help prevent the flow from entering.

Advise building occupants of the potential for sewage backup / release and what they should do to protect themselves and the property in their use.

Contact Plant Operations (734) 647-2059 for response assistance

Contact the University OSEH department (734) 647-1142 for response assistance. This is needed especially when laboratories and dining service operations are affected.

Activate your building floor marshal system to ensure all persons in the building are aware of the situation and what they may need to do.

Unless it is an emergency, do not call 911

## **Recovery - Sewage Backup/ Release**

Due to health hazards present in the water and the residual sludge, do not attempt to clean the floor or equipment yourself. Instead, consult with the University OSEH department (734) 647-1143.

Business continuity plans need to cover the possibility that building occupants must move off the property for a period of time during restoration.

If the building has sustained damage contact Plant Operations (734) 647-2059 for immediate assistance

Contact the Risk Management (734) 764-2200 so claims management and other insurance matters can be handled.