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## Public Utilities Improves Process for Customers

Harrisonburg, Va. – The city of Harrisonburg’s Public Utilities Department has developed a new process for customers, who have a sanitary sewer backup.

Starting more than two years ago, a customer service team at the department began researching their internal processes for handling sanitary sewer backups. It was determined that a few additions and adjustments could be made to ease the process for customers.

During their research, the customer service team determined that a follow up phone call would be made to each customer, who experienced a sewer backup. The staff person would ensure the property owner understood the information they received and answer any questions they had.

The position of a sanitary sewer specialist was assigned to a staff member, who is already specialized and qualified to handle these backups. This employee is dedicated to tracking each backup and providing the necessary resources and assistance to the customer.

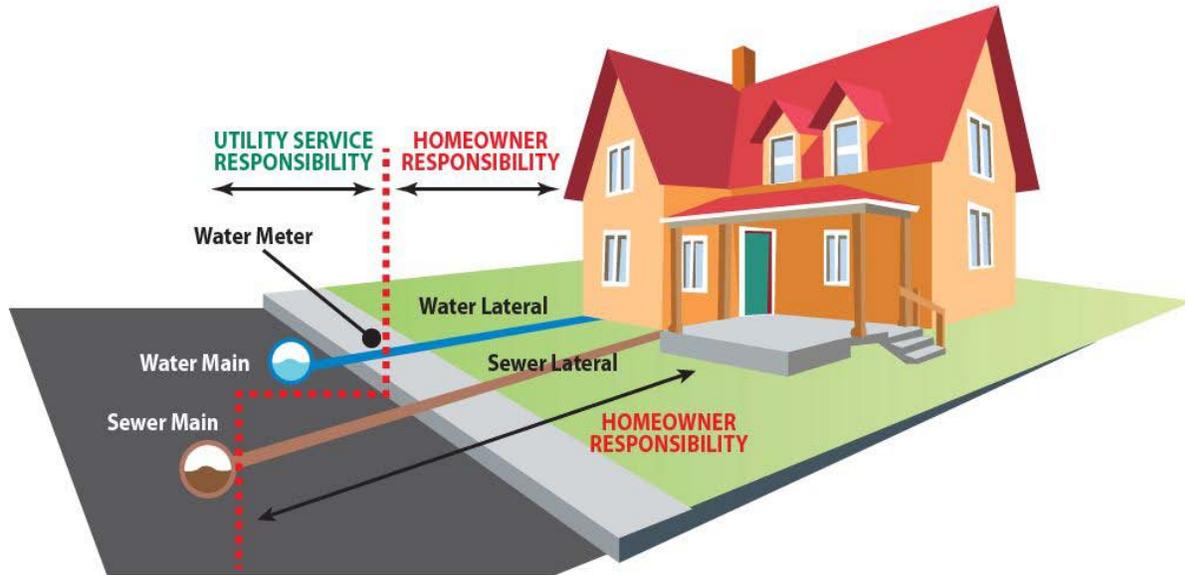
“We are always looking at ways to improve our customer service and the service we provide to the public,” explained Ed Roach, utilities planner with Public Utilities. “By evaluating this process, we were able to make improvements that will ultimately benefit the customers in which we serve.

### **What should residents do if they have a backup in their sanitary sewer?**

In the event residents experience a sewer backup, the first step should always be to call the Department of Public Utilities at 540-434-9959. At that time, the sanitary sewer specialist will assist the resident with the next steps and will dispatch a field crew to the site to better determine the cause of the blockage.

The city is responsible for maintaining the main sanitary sewer line and the connection point of the customer’s sewer lateral. The resident or business owner is responsible for maintaining and repairing their private sewer lateral from the city’s main line to the structure as depicted in the image below.

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In 2015, the city responded to 105 calls for service for sewer backups. Of those calls, 25% were caused by a blockage in the public main and the rest were determined to be a blockage in the private lateral.

The ultimate goal of evaluating and revising this process was to make the process easier for city customers. The Department of Public Utilities has staff available 24/7 for emergency responses to sewer backups.

Additional information about the Department of Public Utilities is available at [www.HarrisonburgVA.gov/public-utilities](http://www.HarrisonburgVA.gov/public-utilities). Customers with questions about sanitary sewer backups can always call 540-434-9959.

*The **Harrisonburg Department of Public Utilities** is responsible for providing water and sewer services to residences and businesses. The Department currently manages approximately 16,000 accounts. For more information about these functions of the city, visit [www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-utilities](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-utilities).*



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