

Local Government Insurance Trust

RISK MANAGEMENT BULLETIN

No. 92

April 24, 2003

Sewer Backup Prevention

These suggestions for enhancing your backup prevention program were items that were brought to our attention by one of our members. We realize that some of our members are doing some of these things, but we thought it would be beneficial to share these preventive measures.

As we know, sewer backups can be caused by a variety of factors and there is no one solution to minimize recurrence. Various collection system components such as pump stations, and sewer lines may have failures for a variety of reasons over periods of time.

We would suggest considering some of the following factors for the pump stations that have had a history of failure or may service low-lying areas:

1. Consider automatic transfer switches that will start generators in the event of a power failure or in the event of a station losing one or more phases of electricity.
2. Consider connecting an emergency alarm to an automatic phone system so that a call for service will go out as soon as a problem is detected.
3. Investigate ways to devise and install an alarm system on gravity operated portions of the sewer system.
4. Develop a regular maintenance schedule for all of your sewer lines to check for foreign objects, grease build up and tree roots encroaching your lines. Periodically, jet the lines, tv the lines to identify problem areas and tree roots and use effective root removal methods. Maintain complete records of your maintenance program documenting the type of maintenance performed, who performed it, the date and note any problems in the locale.
5. Address "Hot Spots" and keep those areas on a more frequent maintenance schedule.
6. Suggestions on how to advise residents, especially in low lying areas, should consider installing backflow preventers. You may wish to review the National Standard Plumbing Code and any local regulations to help you guide your residents with this issue.
7. Recommend that residents install backup devices (i.e., backflow preventers, etc.).
8. Recommend to residents that they should inquire with their homeowner's insurance carrier to obtain a separate endorsement for sewer backup coverage. (We understand such endorsements are relatively inexpensive less than \$100 per year).

For more information on this topic, please refer to the Risk Management Manual Sewer Backup Policy Guidelines or call, Richard A. Furst, Senior Loss Control Manager, (410) 312-0880.

This bulletin is intended to be merely informational and is not intended to be used as the basis for any compliance with federal, state or local laws, regulations or rules, nor is it intended to substitute for the advice of legal counsel. These items are not listed in any order of priority nor are they meant to be all-inclusive.

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