

## **Coping with Sanitary Sewer Backups**

A sewer backup creates a stressful and emotional situation for the homeowner/renter. In some cases it may cause health and safety concerns as well as significant property loss. A proper response to a sewer backup can greatly minimize property damage and diminish the threat of illness.

The Village of Biron makes every effort to be responsive to a resident's needs and concerns when a sewer backup occurs.

Many homeowners' insurance policies exclude damage resulting from sewer backups. However, some insurance companies do provide sewer backup coverage with a special rider. If you are concerned about the possibility of a sewer backup and want to insure that you are covered, the Village urges you to check with your home insurer regarding the availability of sewer backup insurance.

## **Procedures to follow after a Sanitary Sewer Backup**

The following guidelines are intended to assist the resident or owner and are not intended to be an inclusive list of recommended procedures and precautions following a sewer backup. Depending on the individual circumstances of each loss situation and in order to ensure a healthy indoor environment for current and future occupants, it may be necessary to contact a professional water damage restoration service.

Sewage and floodwater contain bacteria and other hazardous microorganisms. These can be transmitted by touching contaminated items or by tracking them into uncontaminated areas on shoes. Children and pets are especially vulnerable. Frequent hand washing is an important preventive measure.

Potential health and safety hazards must be identified and, if possible, eliminated prior to implementing cleaning or restoration procedures. Before entering the affected area, the potential for electrical shock hazards and gas leaks must be assessed.

It is very important to begin mitigation procedures as soon as safely possible to minimize subsequent health hazards and primary property loss and to avoid secondary damage to structural materials or microorganism development (mold and mildew). Loss mitigation begins with rapid response and involves reasonable and prudent steps required to preserve, protect and secure property from additional secondary damage. Unlike fire or other similar type losses, water losses may not start out severe, but may end up causing damage because of delay in cleaning up the water or sewage. The prospect of successful restoration depends largely on the speed with which the building and personal property

can be dried. Generally, by taking proper emergency action immediately, a sewer backup will result in either no damage or minimum damage caused by the water.

Regardless of the cause of the sewer backup, the Village of Biron does not provide or arrange for any cleaning that may be needed inside a building following a sewer backup. The resident or owner has the responsibility to minimize damage.

1. Treat all water-impacted surfaces and furnishings as unhealthy, until properly cleaned.
2. Keep children and pets out of the affected area until the area is properly cleaned.
3. If there is no risk of electrical shock, turn off circuit breakers supplying electricity to wet areas; unplug and remove any small electrical devices currently located on wet floor coverings or other wet areas.
4. Do not use any electrical equipment while standing in water. Operate wet vacuums only when plugged into a ground fault interrupter or ground fault equipped outlet.
5. Remove all water and sewage from the basement or other affected area as rapidly and safely as possible.
6. Extracted wastewater must be disposed of in a sanitary sewer system.
7. Ventilate the affected area with the use of floor fans, and a dehumidifier if available, to properly dry the area. You may rent floor fans and dehumidifiers. If it has not been directly contacted by water, activate the building's HVAC (heating, ventilation and air-conditioning) system, turn on exhaust or ceiling fans and open windows and doors when conditions are favorable. Careful consideration must be given to whether use of existing drying resources might serve as a means of spreading contamination or pose a safety hazard.
8. Do not use heat to dry closed building interiors; mildew and expanded water damage may result.
9. Decontaminate sewage-damaged materials by spraying them with, or immersing within, a cleaning solution. This treatment will not provide full disinfection, nor is it intended to do so. The objective of initial decontamination is to commence the reduction and mitigation of microorganisms as quickly as possible. It is important to recognize that exposure to materials treated during initial decontamination poses a health risk and may result in an adverse reaction. A second disinfection should take place following the initial cleaning.

10. All tools and machines used, especially pumps, vacuum recovery tanks and hoses must also be cleaned and decontaminated.
11. Remove and secure small furniture items as possible to minimize rust or stains and expedite restoration.
12. Place aluminum foil under legs of wood furniture, especially antiques that may permanently stain carpet.
13. Thoroughly clean and dry all wood furniture and other wooden items then wipe them with an oil-base wood polish.
14. Hang draperies and pin up furniture skirts as possible to prevent contact with wet floor coverings, minimizing damage such as water marks, dye transfer and migration.
15. Remove, clean and dry all wet rugs, clothing, shoes, books, paper goods, fabrics, potted plants, items stored in boxes or other items that may stain the carpet (check especially under beds and in closets). Valuable books and documents may be frozen to retard mildew growth until cleaning and drying can be performed.
16. Remove and secure breakables, moisture sensitive or high-value items.
17. It is recommended that a determination be made as to whether floor-covering materials (e.g., carpet, cushion, vinyl, wood, laminates) are salvable. Considerations may include, but are not necessarily limited to, owner preference, construction integrity, porosity, and potential health effects from contaminants.
18. Take up saturated rugs and carpets when hardwood floors are at risk.
19. If the water was high enough to involve a motor on a furnace, or electrical appliance, call a reputable repair business to remove the motor and dry it. In most cases a motor can be dried without incurring any damage to the motor.
20. Take all items that have finely machined parts, such as sewing machines and typewriters, to a repair facility immediately for cleaning and oiling.
21. Transport computers to a dry environment, remove cases and blow dry with low-pressure air and contact a repair facility.
22. Wash all concrete or tile floors with fresh water, then wash them with a strong germ-killing and odor killing solution.
23. Other than paper products, there are very few items that are permanently damaged by water unless allowed to sit in that wet condition. Water will not hurt metal or

wood if thoroughly dried and wiped down with some form of oil. Clothing and carpet not cleaned and dried will mildew and stain. Motors and machine metal parts can be saved if thoroughly dried by a professional. Floor tile and carpeting will remain secure if the water is removed immediately, otherwise, the water will dissolve the adhesives used in securing the floor tile or carpet to the floor. Wood furniture, wood paneling, and other wooden objects will check, separate, stain or warp if left wet.