

Preventing Sewer Line Backups

There a common problem with tree roots in sewer lines that obstruct the flow of waste water out of houses and into the main sewer line. As homes age and trees grow this problem becomes more likely. In our community the problem is often first recognized when waste/sewer water backs up in the basement sink. If not immediately noticed, that waste/sewer water can quickly fill the sink and overflow into the basement. That can be a major catastrophe for the homeowner.

There are a number of actions homeowners can take to mitigate and/or prevent this from happening.

First Recognise a Problem Exists and Take Action

If you notice that the basement sink is beginning to drain more slowly over time than normal, you may be experiencing the first signs of a tree root obstruction. There are a number of chemical treatments that can prevent the problem from escalating into a complete blockage of the sewer line. The two most common treatments are with 'rock salt' or 'copper sulfate'. The more effective treatment of the two and that needs fewer treatments is the copper sulfate treatment. We recommend a product called "Root Kill" marketed by Zep Commercial and sold at most home improvement stores.

It is important not to wait until complete blockage occurs because some water flow is necessary to move the Root Kill to the area of the root growth. Usually, within 3 to 4 weeks, after roots have been treated with sufficient copper sulfate the roots will die and begin to decay and water flow should increase. As the roots regrow, follow-up treatments with copper sulfate will be required. Applications may be made each year in the spring after plant growth begins, or during late summer or early fall, or any time a reduced water flow, thought to be caused by root growth, occurs. Add 2 lbs of product to sewer lines by pouring about 1/2 pound increments into the toilet bowl nearest the sewer line and flush, repeat this process until the recommended dose has been added. It's best to do this at night before going to bed because you want the chemical to have around 12 hours to act on the roots.

Zep Commercial
Retail Technical Support
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If you have additional questions regarding the product and how it should be used, please give us a call at 1-88-805-4357 and one of our representatives will be happy to assist you. We are typically available M-F, 9am-5pm EST.

How to Prevent Basement Sink Overflows

There are very affordable devices sold at most home improvement stores that any homeowner can install in and/or around the basement sink to detect water that has overflowed the sink or a situation where the sink is about to overflow. They are called "Water Level Alarms" and are battery powered similar to smoke detectors. They consist of a "water sensor" connected by a wire to an "alarm unit".

Here is a picture of typical water sensor installed with double sided tape in the basement sink about 5 inches below the top of the sink to warn before the sink overflows:



Here is a picture of the “Alarm Unit” attached to the outside of the basement sink with double sided tape.



These alarms produce a very loud squeal that is impossible to ignore.

What to do if there is a Complete Blockage that will not Drain

Immediately report the issue to our Residential Property Manager. He/she will immediately contact our on-call plumber to visit your home with the equipment necessary to physically remove and clear the obstruction.

Once the obstruction is cleared, we recommend that you follow the instructions at the beginning of this paper and treat your drain pipes with "Root Kill" twice a year. Applications may be made each year in the spring after plant growth begins, or during late summer or early fall, or any time a reduced water flow, thought to be caused by root growth, occurs. Add 2 lbs of product to sewer lines by pouring about 1/2 pound increments into the toilet bowl nearest the sewer line and flush, repeat this process until the recommended dose has been added. It's best to do this at night before going to bed because you want the chemical to have around 12 hours to act on the roots.