Village of Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

SEWER BACKUPS & BASEMENT FLOODING

PREVENTATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE BUILDING OWNER

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Introduction

Purpose
This presentation has been prepared to help educate the property owner about their private plumbing system, including preventative actions that can be taken to help prevent basement flooding.

Contents
Pages 3 – 7 – General information about sewers and flooding
Pages 7 – 12 – Solutions to prevent flooding from surcharges
Pages 13 – 14 – Information on clear water sump pump systems
Page 15 – Information on the Building Sewer Lateral

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Sewer System Types

**Combined Sewer**
Both storm water and sanitary sewage combine into one system
Typically the downspouts are connected to this system
Drain tile (if any) are connected by gravity to this system
*(Whitefish Bay has no Combination Sewers)*

**Separated Sewer**
Separate storm and sanitary drainage systems
Most Whitefish Bay homes do not have a storm sewer lateral
Downspouts discharge to grade
Drain tile (if any) discharge to the sanitary sewer via a drain tile receiver
*(Homes built before 1955)*
Sources of Basement Flooding

Two sources of flooding during rain storms
1) Sewer System Surcharge

2) Rain/surface water drainage

Other sources of basement flooding
1) Sewer back up (plugged sewer)
   • Root infiltration
   • Shifted/Broken Clay Tiles
   • Soft Plugs

2) Broken water lines
**Sewer System Surcharge**

**Definition:** Surcharge means to overload the sewer system (greater volume of water and/or sewage than the system can convey per unit of time)

**Result:** Water level in the system raises from the normal flow condition and causes flooding in areas that are at a lower elevation than the surcharged system water level. (Ex. Water flows backwards in a sewer lateral, continues to rise, comes out of the basement floor drain and begins to flood the basement) (To many cars trying to merge onto the freeway at the same time)
Sources of SurchARGE

Separated Sewer Systems

- Capacity problems as mentioned above based on the following problems:

  **Infiltration of the sanitary sewer system.**
  Infiltration is the result of ground water entering the sanitary sewer system due to leaks in the system such as cracked pipes, leaking joints and manholes, non sealed manhole lids and cross connections (a clear water fixture or sump pump connected to the sanitary system)
  As per present day design standards a sanitary sewer system should have NO increase in sewer flow during a rain storm. However, when the sanitary system is designed there is a design allowance for infiltration.

  **Drain Tile Receivers**
  Most homes in Whitefish Bay have drain tile which connect directly to the sanitary or combination sewer. These drain tile receivers directly convey ground water into the sewer system. Drain tile receivers are typically 3” in diameter and are connected to the basement floor drain. (Drain tile receivers/drain tile system can flow in excess of 50 gallons per minute)
Drain Tile Receiver

TYPICAL SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE W/ DRAIN TILE RECEIVER - NO DOWNSPOUT CONNECTIONS

SCALE: N.T.S.
Other Sources of Basement Flooding

Besides sewer surcharges there are other factors that cause basement flooding.

- **Ground & Surface Water**
  - Downspouts that do not discharge away from the home. Instead of the water running away from the structure, it follows down the basement walls and into the basement.
  - Improper grading. Surface water ponds and/or flows toward the house instead of away. Varying degrees of difficulty on how to correct (Sometimes it can not be corrected without installing a drainage system)
  - More water traveling through the ground than the drain tile and/or sewer system/sump pump can handle. (During a surcharge event ground water / drain tile receivers do not work)
  - Ground water conveyed through excavations/ditches. Very common problem in new construction where pipes are installed with stone bedding. The stone acts as a vein for ground water to enter the basement. (Typically a clay dam is installed to help prevent this in lower elevation settings)
Surcharge Solutions

**Design Premise:** Design a system that prevents the backflow of water in the sewer line from entering the basement through the plumbing fixtures.

**Primary Questions in Design**

1. What type of sewer system is the structure connected to and what fixtures are connected to the sewer?
2. In previous floods where has the water come from?
3. What value does the client put on preventing flooding? Determination of system type, budget and sophistication.
Back Water Valves

**Definition:** A mechanical device that prevents the backwards flow of water/sewage in a sewer line.

**Installation Types:**

1) **Whole House**
   - Can only be used if there is no drain tile receiver and the downspouts do not drain to the interior sewer.
   - Most amount of options available.
   - Typically located just upstream of the main cleanout in the basement.

2) **Fixture / Branch**
   - Each basement fixture or fixture branch has a back water valve installed.
   - Increased number of valves increases percentage of malfunction.
   - Allows for a drain tile receiver (not recommended) and downspout connections (combined sewer areas).
   - Typically more costly and less valve options available.
SEPERATED SEWER AREA -
WHOLE HOUSE BACK WATER VALVE W/ SUMP PUMP
Valve Types

1) Conventional Style (Check Valve Type)
   - Least expensive ($40 to $800 + Installation)
   - Multiple material options
   - Average reliability

Common Brands
PVC: Spears, Rectorseal, Canplas
Cast Iron: JR Smith & Zurn

2) Valve Style (Manual and Automated)
   - Typically more expensive ($100 to $2,000 + Installation)
   - Plastic (manual only), cast iron and stainless steel
   - Increased reliability
   - Manual valves are sometimes used in conjunction with conventional style valves for added protection
   - Automated valves can sometimes be an assembly including the valve, sensor and actuator.

Common Brands
PVC: Spears, Valterra
Cast Iron: JR Smith (Flood Gate)

NOTE: Valves require access pits for cleaning. Pits are of vary sizes but range from 10 to 24 inches in diameter
Back Water Valves
Installation & Maintenance

Install
• Need to have access to the valve for cleaning. (pit or access manhole, the pit can be a source of ground water entering the basement when hydraulic pressure builds under the floor)
• Valves have an approximate $\frac{1}{2}$” to 1” elevation difference in them, so installation on an existing sewer can be problematic. In some cases the valve can not be installed or modifications to the basement sewer have to be done.

Maintenance
• Valves need to be cleaned as often as possible. (manufacturer’s recommendation at a minimum)
• Can not clean the sewer through a back water valve, rodder will get stuck and wreck the valve.
• Can only give the client a limited warranty.
Alternate Methods

Sewage Ejection System

- Most effective/reliable way of preventing backflow from a surcharged sewer.
- Lets the waste stack act as a standpipe during a surcharge.
- Only pump sanitary waste from the basement fixtures.
- Multiple pump options along with alarms, etc...
- Does require maintenance, energy consumption and is a mechanical system; however, the ejector pumps do not need to run to prevent a sewer surcharge during a rain storm.
- Assumes that the basement under floor piping can withstand pressure during a surcharge. (usually not a problem, minor leakage only)

Automated Valves

- High end system.
- Install a whole house valve (sluice gate style) with an automatic actuator, (air or electric). Valve closes when a sensor recognizes a backflow condition. Can be programmed to exercise itself on a regular basis.
- JR Smith Flood Gate works on a similar premise without the controls but does not have the closing force that an automated valve can have.
- These system are custom tailored to the homeowner and would require the knowledge of a plumbing engineer.
Clear Water Sump Pump Systems

**Definition:** A mechanical system for conveying ground water that is collected from the foundation drains of a structure.

**Reason for System:** Need a way of removing ground water when the drain tile receiver is not effective. (during a surcharge event or if the drain tile receiver is removed from service) If groundwater is not removed then hydraulic pressure is created under the floor and on the exterior of the basement walls. Water seeps into the basement through any open crevice. Hydraulic pressure can lead to structural failure of a building.

**Obstacles to Consider:**

- **Discharge location** – must discharge far enough from the structure to prevent “circling”, but not cause problems for neighbors. Need to prevent from creating an “icing condition” during cold months.

- **Reliability of power supply** – The system needs power. No power, the basement can flood. Battery back up systems are available but are limited in size and run time. Higher end systems include a source of back up power such as a back up generator.
Clear Water Sump Pump Systems

Sizing of the System: In order to size the clear water system an analysis of the ground water level and hydrology of the soil needs to be done for peak rain events. The goal of this analysis is to try and determine a peak flow rate for the system. From this the sump crock and pump can be sized.

Sump Pumps: Now that the flow rate has been established, the size of the clear water pump(s) need to be determined. Typically we want to have at least 10% more pumping capacity than our peak flow. However, this does not mean we need one large pump to do this. Typically, two smaller pumps are better than one. The logic is that under low flow conditions only one pump needs to run and the key to pump life is duration of run time. If the pump does not run for a long enough period (15 seconds) then the life of the pump is compromised. Redundancy is also important- the worst time for a pump failure is when you need it the most.

Sump Crock: The sump crock size is determined by the flow rate and pump selection. As mentioned above, the pump, when activated, needs to run for a minimum on 15 seconds. In order to do that there needs to be enough storage capacity in the crock. Crocks have to be a minimum of 18” in diameter and are as large as 36” in diameter, with some even larger. They are made out of plastic, fiberglass, concrete, even steel with lids to match.

Installation: The installation time varies on the size of the crock and the number and type of pump(s) used. For a typical installation the primary labor hours are in the breaking and removal of the basement floor, the remove of the necessary dirt and the backfilling of the excavation with stone. For a smaller sump crock it takes approximately one day for a plumber and laborer to fully complete the installation.
Building Sewer Laterals and Infiltration

What is the Building Sewer? - The building sewer is the pipe that connects the house or property to the sewer in the street. Building sewers in Whitefish Bay are typically 6 inch clay pipes. These pipes have “bell and spigot” ends. When installed the spigot is placed inside the bell and either cement mortar or tar was used to seal the joint. These pipes are typically 2 to 5 feet long.

Who maintains the Building Sewer? - The property owner. In Wisconsin the property owner is responsible for cleaning and repairs of the building sewer from the building to, and including, the connection to the mainline sewer. Sewer repair tend to be costly due the depth and restoration requirements. (IE – roadway repairs)

Infiltration of the Building Sewer? - Infiltration refers to ground water that seeps into the sanitary sewer system through cracks, breaks, etc., in the system. For years MMSD and the local sewer utilities have been working on reducing infiltration. Repairs include pipe replacement, pipe lining, manhole replacement and lining and watertight manhole covers and casting assemblies. The next area to address is the 3000+ miles of old sanitary sewer laterals in the MMSD coverage area. The same principals that have been used to reduce infiltration for the mainline system should be implemented for the private building sewers.

Sewer Maintenance: What do I need to do, if anything? and why? By maintaining your sewer lateral you can greatly extend the life of the system and help reduce infiltration. Tree roots are the enemy of a sewer lateral. Roots tend to ground downward in the disturbed, moist soil of a sewer ditch. After a while the root leaders (very narrow, web like roots) tend to grow through the weak cement joints of the clay sewer pipe. After time the roots grow and widen. This causes multiple problems including plugged sewers and cracks or holes in the sewer pipe. If not treated the sewer pipe will lose enough of its structure and collapse. At that time there is no way of repairing or correcting the problem without excavation. To help prevent this a reputable plumber should clean and video inspect the sewer. If tree roots or scale is a problem a cleaning program should be set in place. A periodic video inspection is a good tool to forewarn and possible prevent a sewer problem.

Sewer Repairs and Replacement: In the event that a sewer repair or replacement is necessary, there are some options. There are four basic ways of dealing with a repair/replacement. 1) Spot Repair, this involves digging a hole just where the problem is and replacing a section of bad sewer. 2) Open Cut Replacement, as it sounds, involves digging from the front of the residence to the sewer connection and replacing the sewer the entire way. 3) Pipe Bursting, this technology allows you to replace the sewer from the basement to the main while only digging one hole at the sewer main. Basically a new pipe, (typically High Density Polyethylene) is pulled through the old sewer and reconnected on both ends. 4) Lateral Lining – Lining is great alternative for a sewer that is in poor condition but does not have any failure points or dips. The liner is typically installed from the basement.
SANITARY SEWER LATERAL - COMMON FAILURES/ SOURCES OF INFILTRATION