

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SEWER SYSTEM

Do you know where the water from your sink, shower, washing machine, dishwasher, and toilet goes after it disappears down the drain? It travels through an extensive system of underground pipes that collect this wastewater (known as sewage) and move it to a treatment plant for processing. This remarkable piping system is known as the sewer system.

In Los Angeles County, the sewer system consists of 17,000 miles of underground pipes. That's the same length as three trips from LAX to Hawaii and back! Sewer systems have been around for thousands of years – going back to ancient Roman, Greek, and Middle Eastern cities. These ancient civilizations understood, just as we do today, that a sewer system is essential in protecting public health and the environment, and maintaining clean and safe communities. The modern development of sewer systems and treatment plants is considered one of the most significant public health improvements in history.

Typically, the sewage moves from small pipes (4 to 6 inches in diameter) connected to each business or home to bigger pipes (up to 100 inches in diameter or greater) that serve large areas, including cities. The responsibility for maintaining the system changes as the sewage moves from the smaller pipes to the bigger pipes. See the diagram on the inside of this brochure for more information.



Inside a large diameter sewer



Sewage overflowing a manhole cover



Sanitation Districts' maintenance personnel at work

SEWAGE OVERFLOWS

The sewer system is designed, monitored, and maintained to prevent the discharge of sewage into the environment. Despite this, unanticipated sewage overflows may occur due to pipe blockages or damage to the system and cause sewage to spill into your home or public areas. Because a sewage overflow creates public health and environmental concerns, it is very important that, if you see or suspect a sewage overflow, you avoid contact with the sewage and use the information on the inside of this brochure to figure out who to immediately contact.

TAKE ACTION TO KEEP YOUR SEWERS CLEAN AND PREVENT OVERFLOWS

As a property owner, you are responsible for keeping your sewer pipes clear of clogs or blockages. Listed below are actions you can take to prevent overflows and protect your property from expensive cleanup and repairs.

ROOTS cause 80% of sewage overflows. They intrude into sewer pipes through cracked or separated joints, and then clog or rupture them.

✓ What can you do?

1. Do not plant trees or shrubs near your sewer pipes.
2. When replacing sewer pipes, consider installing Schedule 40 ABS and PVC pipes, which are more resistant to root intrusion.
3. Use commercially available products to remove and prevent re-growth of roots. Avoid products containing copper sulfate and sodium hydroxide. These are not as effective.

FATS, OILS, AND GREASE (FOG) can solidify in sewer pipes and create blockages.

✓ What can you do?

Do not pour waste oil and cooking residue directly into your drain. Instead, place it into a covered container and dispose of it in the trash.

WIPES do not disintegrate in the sewer system, not even those that are marked “flushable.” They can clog pipes and cause overflows.

✓ What can you do?

Place all wipes into the trash. Never flush them down the toilet or any other drain.



Converting Waste Into Resources

For more information about the Sanitation Districts, please visit www.lacsd.org

YOUR GUIDE TO THE SEWER SYSTEM



Learn

what happens

to the water

from your sink,

shower, toilet

and washer

WHO OWNS THE SEWER SYSTEM...

1 Your Pipes. The pipes that connect your home or business to the sewer in the street are known as sewer laterals. As the owner of the home or business, you are responsible for maintaining these pipes.

If there is an overflow from your sewer lateral or from plumbing fixtures (toilets, sinks, shower drains) in your home or business, stop using your water immediately.

☎ Contact a licensed plumber. You may also need to contact a specialized clean-up service to help remove any accumulated sewage and to disinfect any of your property that came in contact with the sewage.

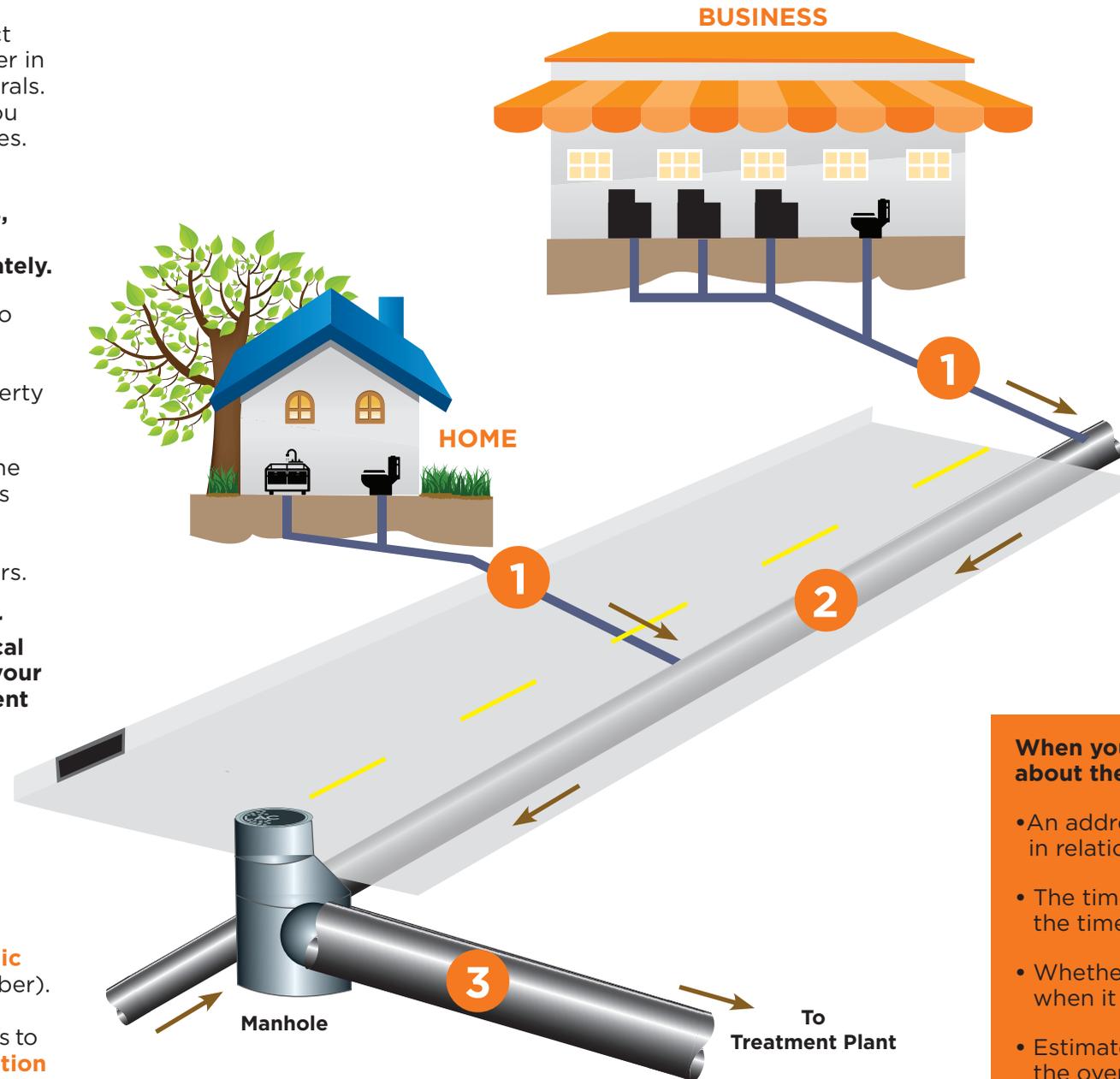
2 Local sewers. Local sewers take the sewage from neighborhood homes and businesses and transport it to larger, regional sewers. Your city or other public agency maintains these local sewers.

If you see or suspect an overflow in your neighborhood, it probably involves a local sewer. These sewers are maintained by your city or by Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. Use the following information to immediately report the overflow.

☎ Visit www.lacsd.org/overflow.asp to determine who to contact for your particular city.

For local sewers maintained by **Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, call 626-458-4357** (24-hour number).

Report an overflow in the City of Los Angeles to **Bureau of Sanitation, Wastewater Collection Systems Division 213-485-7575** (24-hour number).



3 Regional sewers. The regional sewer system collects the sewage from the local sewers and moves it to a treatment plant for processing.

The Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County manages over 1,400 miles of regional sewers. The service area for the Sanitation Districts includes nearly all of Los Angeles County outside of the City of Los Angeles.

If you see or suspect an overflow in areas outside of your neighborhood, do the following:

☎ Report an overflow in Los Angeles County, outside of the City of Los Angeles, to **Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County 562-437-6520** (24-hour number).

Report an overflow in the City of Los Angeles to **Bureau of Sanitation, Wastewater Collection Systems Division 213-485-7575** (24-hour number).

When you report an overflow, have as much information about the spill as possible, including:

- An address where the overflow is occurring or where it is in relation to the nearest cross streets.
- The time the overflow started, if known; otherwise, the time it was first noticed.
- Whether the overflow is ongoing or, if known, when it stopped.
- Estimated amount of the overflow or the area that the overflow is affecting.

AND WHO DO YOU CONTACT IN THE EVENT OF AN OVERFLOW?