

# PREVENTING AND SOLVING SEWAGE TREATMENT PROBLEMS DURING A FLOOD

## How can I prevent sewage back-up?

Flood water can increase pressure on your sewage system, leading to possible sewage back-ups. The following precautions will help prevent a sewage back-up in your home.

Sinks, bathtubs and showers:

- Flush toilets only when necessary.
- Take sponge baths instead of tub baths or showers.
- Use towelettes to clean your hand - unless they are very dirty, or you are preparing food.

In the kitchen:

- Use disposable plates, cups and silverware whenever possible.
- Do not use your dishwasher—wash all dishes by hand.
- Prepare foods that won't get as many dishes dirty—such as canned or frozen fruits and vegetables.
- Do not run water in the sink to get it cool - use ice or cool it in the refrigerator, instead.

In the laundry:

- Take your laundry to the laundromat—don't do it at home.

And in general:

- Avoid discharging water into floor drains.
- If you use a sump pump, do not pump the effluent into a septic tank.
- Do not use your water softener.
- Check for leaky faucets and water pipes.

## What if a back-up does happen?

- **If you do end up with a sewage back-up problem, the following steps will help keep the damage to a minimum.**
- **Begin by removing all floor drain covers.**
- **Use mechanical metal grip plugs to seal the drains and prevent sewage from entering your home.**

- **Repeat the process for toilets, bathtub drains and shower drains. Metal grip plugs are available at plumbing supply stores.**

### **What if my system becomes flooded?**

Stop using your sewage system if:

- Your septic tank or drain field becomes flooded
- You can see any raw sewage or “gray water” on the surface of the ground, as a result of waste water leaking from your system.
- Wastewater begins to enter your home through drains or plumbing fixtures.

### **What do I need to do after the flood is over?**

After the flood waters recede, check to see if any major system components have been under water. Check septic tanks, drop boxes, distribution boxes, lift stations, and any other vault type structures. If any portion of the system has been in contact with flood water, be sure to pump out all solids and liquids before using the system again.

If your drain field was under water, you will need to wait until the soil dries out sufficiently before using the system. There should be no saturated soil within three feet of the system, and there should be at least three feet of unsaturated soil between the bottom of the system and the water table.

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service