

# Sewer-wise Factsheet

## SEWAGE OVERFLOWS

Sewage contains bacteria, viruses, and other organisms that can cause illness unless you take proper precautions. Cleanup should begin as soon as the sewage have receded or been removed. The longer that sewage is allowed to remain in your home, the greater the potential for sickness and irreparable damage to your home.

### Who can help?

A list of cleaning companies can be found in the yellow pages under "Cleaning Contractors". Companies that provide special clean up services can be found listed under "Carpet & Furniture Cleaning & Protection." Contact your insurance provider for advice on coverage.

## SAFETY FIRST

### *Be Safe*

- Wait for the water/sewage to go down, or pump out flooded areas.
- **Do not** allow pets or children to play in affected areas or contaminated water.
- Take care when walking on wet, slippery surfaces.

### *Be Careful*

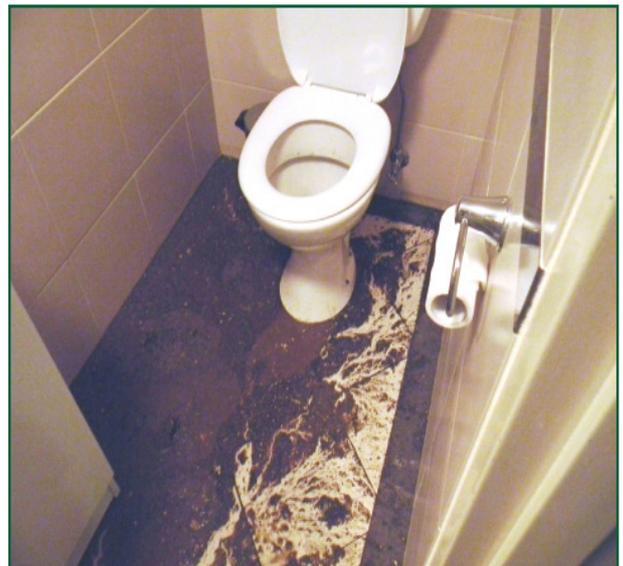
- Assume anything in contact with sewage is contaminated.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Wear water proof gloves or do not assist in the clean up process, especially if you have cuts or open sores.
- Wear leak proof rubber boots that will keep your feet safe and dry.
- **Contact a doctor immediately if illness occurs.**

### *Be Aware*

- There may be potential damage to utilities (gas and electric) from contaminated water.
- If you are not comfortable working on your utilities or appliances, call a professional.

## STAY HEALTHY

- Disinfect dishes and utensils and everything else that sewage have touched.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in areas contaminated by sewage.
- Thoroughly launder or discard all exposed clothing.
- If you've been exposed to sewage, you need to be up-to-date on your vaccinations for tetanus and diphtheria.
- Small children, pregnant women and people with health problems should avoid sewage contaminated areas until clean-up is complete. Small children tend to put things in their mouths. Pregnant women and people with health problems need to use caution to avoid injury and exposure to disease.



More information can be found at <http://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/>

**Business Hours:** 1300 735 025

**Emergency After Hours:** 1300 735 025

## CLEAN IT UP

### (small and localised contamination)

#### Step 1: Gather the necessary cleaning supplies.

- Brooms, mops, brushes, sponges
- Buckets, hoses
- Rubber gloves and boots
- Cleaning products
- Disinfectants
- Trash bags



#### Step 2: Remove any gross contamination.

Physically remove organic matter (raw sewage and silt) by any safe means available. **Dispose of in an approved manner and not into stormwater drains or landfill.** Always throw away any contaminated objects that cannot be thoroughly disinfected including:

- Food and food containers
- Books, paper products and cardboard
- Cosmetics
- Medicines and medical supplies
- Stuffed animals and toys
- Mattresses and pillows
- Upholstered couches and chairs
- Carpet and padding
- Timber and cane furniture
- Objects that are porous or difficult to clean
- Brooms, mops, brushes etc that has been used for clean-up purposes

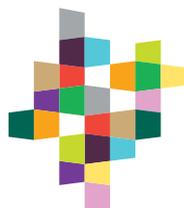
#### Step 3: Clean up one room at a time.

A 2-bucket approach is most efficient. Use one bucket for the cleaning solution and the other for the clean rinse water. After using the cleaning solution, rinse your mop, sponge, or cleaning cloth in the rinse bucket. Re-wet your mop in the cleaning solution. Using 2 buckets keeps most of the dirty rinse water out of your cleaning solution. Replace the rinse water frequently. After cleaning a room or item, go over it again with a disinfectant to kill the germs and odour left by the sewage and/or floodwaters. You may also need to get rid of mildew. **DO NOT MIX BLEACH WITH OTHER HOUSEHOLD CHEMICAL PRODUCTS.** In case of heavy contamination, you should get a professional cleaning contractor.

#### Step 4: Dry out your home and remove mildew by lowering the humidity.

- Open up your house-open outside doors and windows.
- Open up closet doors and cabinet doors.
- Circulate the air with fans.
- Run a dehumidifier.

# QPRC



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is a sewer choke or blockage and why does it occur?

~This refers to the overloading of the sewer beyond its design capacity due to misuse such as an accumulation of fat, grease, rags etc. which clogs or blocks a sewer system resulting in discharges of raw sewage. Root damage to sewer lines also leads to clogged, overflowing, and slow-flowing drains. If a problem occurs in your property sewer, it is your responsibility to have it fixed.

### What is an ORG?

~The ORG, or **O**verflow **R**elief **G**ully, is a critical part of your plumbing system. Should the sewer become blocked or overloaded, it will back up. The ORG is the outside outlet for backed-up sewerage to overflow, instead of through the pipes inside your house. *The ORG should be lower than the lowest drain in your home.*

### How can I reduce surcharge incidences?

~Do not dump oils or fats in your drains, as grease can accumulate and harden directly into a plug.  
~Do not put paints, solvents, solid objects etc down the drains.  
~Do not discard anything down a drain unless it is biodegradable and low in phosphates.  
~Complete regular inspections to assist with identifying defects or problems with the ORG.  
~Keep the ORG clear, don't put pot plants on it, don't drain water into it. Ensure the sewer manholes on properties are kept clear and free from vegetation.  
~Make sure the ORG grate is not fixed so it can pop off if the sewer backs up. Fixed grates can become jammed with toilet paper or other solids rendering the ORG ineffective.

### Is it safe for my family to be in our house after a surcharge?

~If the surcharge affects only a small localised area, it could be safe for you to stay in your home. However, in more severe cases, you may need to arrange for other accommodation.

### Who is going to repair the problem?

~Typically that is dependent upon whether the stoppage is your non-public sewer line or the Council main. If the problem is within the Council's main, we will fix the problem as quickly as possible and keep you up to date regarding what is being undertaken. If the condition is with the private sewer connection linking your house to the main sewer line, it is your responsibility to get your sewer connection fixed.  
~The property owner is responsible for paying for private work. Contact your insurance company for more information. Contact Council if in doubt.