

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I do not have problems with sewer backups. Why do I need to participate in this Program?

A: People who do not have sewer backups themselves may not realize how big an impact their foundation drain, sump pump hookup, leaks in their lateral, or other sources of infiltration/inflow (I/I) from their property have on their neighbors and community. For example, an illegally connected sump pump can contribute in excess of 25 gallons per minute (gpm) to the sanitary sewer system. It is the cumulative effect of all sources of I/I that increases wet weather flows beyond the capacity of the sanitary sewer system, causing sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) and basement backups.

Q: How did the City determine which areas of the City to start this program?

A: The City's sanitary sewer system is divided into 12 meter "districts." In 2009, a Citywide I/I study was completed to help identify which districts contributed the largest volume of I/I to the system. This study was required by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources because of the frequency of SSOs and basement backups in the City. District 7 was identified as one of the districts with the largest volume of I/I and is the first district in which the program will be implemented. District 7 was also chosen because the City recently completed extensive sanitary sewer rehabilitation and replacement work in the District. The City is making significant efforts to address I/I-related problems on publicly owned sewers in each district before requiring private property owners to correct problems with their sewers. This program will be implemented in one or more districts each year as funding and staff availability allow.

Q: How will I know if my home or business is in a targeted district?

A: If your home or business is in a meter district that is targeted for the present year's private property I/I program, you will receive a letter in the mail requesting you to schedule an appointment for City staff to inspect your wastewater and drainage facilities. If you are not in the current year's targeted district, you will not receive a letter, and you will not need to schedule an inspection appointment at this time.

Q: If my district is not in this year's targeted district, is there anything I can do to help?

A: Yes. The most important thing you can do is a self-check of your own property to verify that you do not have any sources of I/I connected to the sanitary sewer and correct those sources that you do find. Informing your neighbors of the program and encouraging them to make the necessary corrections is also very helpful.

Q: Why does City staff need to enter my house? What will they be looking for?

A: City staff will need to access the lower level of your home or building as that is where sump pumps, foundation drains, and other drainage piping are located. City staff will need to assess these items to determine if they are contributing any I/I into the system and therefore not in compliance with City ordinances. Staff will also be looking for exterior sources of I/I on your property. This will be completed by a simple walk around the yard and building. In some cases, smoke testing may also be used to identify exterior sources of I/I. You will receive further information via mail if smoke testing is to be completed in your area.

Q: What can I expect during the home inspection? Is there anything I need to do prior to the inspection?

A: City staff will arrive at your property during the 1-hour time frame you scheduled for the inspection. They will present identification when they introduce themselves. They will typically only need to access the lower level of the building to look at floor drains, sump pumps, and any other connections to the sanitary sewer. It is asked that you clear these areas to allow access for City staff. You are encouraged to accompany staff while they are performing the inspections. No further preparation is needed before the inspection.

Q: Is my participation required?

A: Yes, your participation in this program is required. City Ordinance No. 711 permits City staff to perform the inspections.

Q: What will I have to do if sources of I/I are found on my property?

A: If sources of I/I are found on your property, the City will notify you of these items via a letter and also require that these illegal connections be corrected. As a home/building owner you will be given a reasonable amount of time to correct all violations after receiving the violation notice.

Q: What should I do if I/I sources are identified on my property and I cannot afford to have them corrected?

A: The City Council has committed to finding some type of financial assistance to help property owners finance the needed corrective actions.