

# Getting Help with a Sewage Backup

## STEP 1

Call 311 or visit the 311 website at [311.baltimorecity.gov](http://311.baltimorecity.gov) to report your sewage backup.

## STEP 2

DPW will send an inspector to determine the cause of your sewage backup.

## STEP 3

DPW inspector determines the backup is due to a capacity-related wet weather event.

## STEP 4

Once cleaning is offered and accepted, the cleaning professionals will schedule a time to provide cleaning services.

Stormwater flooding or sewage backups caused by dry weather events (i.e. grease or debris clogs, root intrusion) are not covered by DPW's SOS Program.

# SOS Cleanup Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is eligible for this program?  
The SOS Program is available to owners, residents and tenants of property located in Baltimore City impacted by a sewage backup caused by a capacity-related wet weather event.
2. What is a capacity-related wet weather event?  
A capacity-related wet weather event occurs when the sewer system is unable to handle the volume of sewage flowing when at least ¼ inch of precipitation is recorded within a 24-hour period.
3. Can this program be used for a flooded basement due to a water main break or stormwater seeping in from outside?  
No, this program is designed to support sewer water flooding impacts caused by a wet weather event.
4. How quickly will the cleanup be scheduled and completed after reporting?  
Once it has been determined that a wet weather event caused the backup, the inspector will offer to schedule an SOS Program appointment and explain what services are included. The on-call cleaning contractor will contact the resident within approximately one hour of being notified that the customer would like to use the SOS Program. Actual cleaning schedules are dependent upon customer availability for service with the contractors. The contractor offers appointments from 8 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week.
5. Is there a deadline for reporting an issue and getting cleanup services?  
Customers are encouraged to contact 311 as soon as the sewage backup is discovered. In the event of an extended period between the backup and the discovery of damage, customers may be able to use DPW's Expedited Reimbursement Program to assist with disinfection and cleanup costs.

**DPW's SOS Cleanup Program is a 12-month pilot program.**  
For more information please visit DPW's website [publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/sewer-consent-decree](http://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/sewer-consent-decree) and search for SOS Program.



**SEWAGE ONSITE SUPPORT  
CLEANUP PROGRAM**

Professional sewage backup cleaning...  
at no cost to you.

**To report a sewage backup,  
call 311 or go to  
[311.baltimorecity.gov](http://311.baltimorecity.gov)**

The Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) is pleased to provide customers with the **Sewage Onsite Support (SOS) Program**. The **SOS Program** will assist with cleanup services in the event of a capacity-related sewage backup at a home or apartment caused by a wet weather event. A wet weather event occurs when at least ¼ inch of precipitation is recorded within a 24-hour period.



## Was This A Wet Weather Event?

If there is light rain for 2-3 hours, moderate rain for 30-60 minutes, or heavy rain for 15 minutes, there was likely a wet weather event. You may observe several puddles on the ground that do not disappear easily. Rapid melting of snow could also potentially cause a wet weather event since 10 inches of snow is equivalent to 1 inch of water.

DPW's SOS Program provides cleaning and disinfection services at no cost to the homeowner or tenant. Once the cause of your backup is confirmed to be a wet weather event, DPW will deploy a team of professionals to:

- **Disinfect and Clean:** Eliminate dangerous viruses, bacteria, and other microorganisms from affected areas.
- **Dispose and Remove:** Remove soiled carpet, flooring, furniture and other affected property.
- **Deodorize:** Use professional-grade odor removal equipment, technologies, and processes to tackle unpleasant aromas.
- **Dehumidify and Dry:** Once hazardous materials and excess water have been removed and safely disposed of, completely dry and dehumidify affected areas.

Having professionals thoroughly clean your home protects you from worrisome health risks associated with contacting raw sewage. DPW's SOS Program can help you get your life back to normal as soon as possible.

## Did You Know?

According to the Insurance Information Institute, many standard homeowner's insurance policies do not cover sewer backup unless specific (rider/endorsement) coverage is added to the policy. As a protective measure, you may wish to contact your insurance provider to determine whether your policy covers sewage backup cleanup.

**To help decide if DPW's SOS Program is right for you, consider the following:**

- Raw sewage may contain bacteria, viruses, and other pollutants that can cause disease and contaminate property. The SOS program lets the professionals handle the cleanup for you.
- The SOS Program allows you to avoid contacting your private insurance and having to pay the deductible.
- DPW's SOS Program removes the health risk from your property when you need it most.

# Health Risks

Sewage can be a mixture of waste from both household and industrial sources. Sharing the same space as sewage, for any duration of time, often means coming in contact with many harmful bacteria and diseases. Sewage can contain E. coli, tetanus and a host of other dangerous bacteria and viruses that can cause severe health symptoms.

## DPW's SOS Cleanup Program Services



**Take photos to document all affected areas requiring service**



**Remove and dispose of all affected property (cloth, wood, any porous material)**



**Disinfect and sanitize exposed affected areas**



**Deodorize exposed affected areas**



**Dehumidify and dry exposed affected areas**



**Take photos to document completion of cleaning services**



**Remediate mold and mildew on walls, floors, etc.**



**Restore property (floor, drywall, paint walls, etc.)**



**Sanitize and restore or replace personal belongings**



## Other Independent Services