Sewage Spill
Regulatory Requirements

Allowing sewage to discharge to a gutter or storm drain may subject you to penalties and/or out-of-pocket costs to reimburse cities or public agencies for clean-up efforts. Here are the pertinent codes, fines, and agency contact information that apply.

Orange County Stormwater Program
24 Hour Water Pollution Reporting Hotline
(714) 567-6363
- County and city water quality ordinances prohibit discharges containing pollutants.
- Orange County Health Care Agency
  Environmental Health
  (714) 433-6419
  California Health and Safety Code, Sections 5410-5416
  • No person shall discharge raw or treated sewage or other waste in a manner that results in contamination, pollution or nuisance.
  • Any person who causes or permits a sewage discharge to any state waters:
    • must immediately notify the local health agency of the discharge.
    • shall reimburse the local health agency for services that protect the public’s health and safety (water contact receiving waters).
    • who fails to provide the required notice to the local health agency is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine (between $500–$1,000) and/or imprisonment for less than one year.
- Regional Water Quality Control Board
  Santa Ana Region San Diego Region
  (951) 782-4130 (858) 467-2952
  Requires the prevention, mitigation, response to and reporting of sewage spills.
- California Office of Emergency Services
  (800) 852-7550
  California Water Code, Article 4, Chapter 4, Sections 13268-13271
  • Any person who causes or permits sewage in excess of 1,000 gallons to be discharged to state waters shall immediately notify the Office of Emergency Services.
  • Any person who fails to provide the notice required by this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine (less than $20,000) and/or imprisonment for not more than one year.
- California Code of Regulations, Title 23, Division 3, Chapter 9.2, Article 2, Sections 2250-2260
  • Any person who causes or permits a sewage discharge to any state waters:
    • must immediately notify the Office of Emergency Services.
  •誰 fails to provide the notice required by this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine (less than $20,000) and/or imprisonment for not more than one year.
  • Any person who fails to provide the notice required by this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine (less than $20,000) and/or imprisonment for not more than one year.

Sewage Spill Reference Guide
Your Responsibilities as a Private Property Owner

Residences Businesses Homeowner/Condominium Associations Federal and State Complexes Military Facilities

Orange County Sanitation District

Sewage Spill
What is a Sewage Spill?
Sewage spills occur when the wastewater being transported via underground pipes overflows through a manhole, cleanout or broken pipe. Sewage spills can cause health hazards, damage to homes and businesses, and threaten the environment, local waterways and beaches.

Common Causes of Sewage Spills
Grease builds up inside and eventually blocks sewer pipes. Grease gets into the sewer from food establishments, household drains, as well as from poorly maintained commercial grease traps and interceptors.

Structure problems caused by tree roots in the lines, broken/cracked pipes, missing or broken cleanout caps or under sized sewers can cause blockages.

Infiltration and inflow (I/I) impacts pipe capacity and is caused when groundwater or rainwater enters the sewer system through pipe defects and illegal connections.

What to Look For
Sewage spills can be a very noticeable gushing of water from a manhole or a slow water leak that may take time to be noticed. Don’t dismiss unaccounted-for wet areas.

Look for:
• Drain backups inside the building.
• Wet ground and water leaking around manhole lids onto your street.
• Leaking water from cleanouts or outside drains.
• Unusual odorous wet areas: sidewalks, external walls or ground/landscape around a building.

Caution
Keep people and pets away from the affected area. Untreated sewage has high levels of disease-causing viruses and bacteria. Call your local health care agency listed on the back for more information.

If You See a Sewage Spill Occurring, Notify Your City Sewer/Public Works Department or Public Sewer District IMMEDIATELY!
How a Sewer System Works
A property owner’s sewer pipes are called service laterals and are connected to larger local main and regional trunk lines. Service laterals run from the connection at the home to the connection with the public sewer (including the area under the street). These laterals are the responsibility of the property owner and must be maintained by the property owner. Many city agencies have adopted ordinances requiring maintenance of service laterals. Check with your city sewer/public works department for more information.

Operation and maintenance of local and regional sewer lines are the responsibility of the city sewer/public works departments and public sewer districts.

Preventing Grease Blockages

The drain is not a dump! Recycle or dispose of grease properly and never pour grease down the drain.

Homeowners should mix fats, oils and grease with absorbent waste materials such as paper, coffee grounds, or kitty litter and place it in the trash. Wipe food scraps from plates and pans and dump them in the trash.

Restaurants and commercial food service establishments should always use “Kitchen Best Management Practices.” These include:

- Collecting all cooking grease and liquid oil from pots, pans and fryers into covered grease containers for recycling.
- Properly maintaining grease traps or interceptors by having them serviced regularly. Check your local city codes.
- Collecting all cooking grease and liquid oil from pots, pans and fryers into covered grease containers for recycling.
- Properly maintaining grease traps or interceptors by having them serviced regularly. Check your local city codes.
- Having spill kits readily available for cleaning up spills.
- Properly maintaining grease traps or interceptors by having them serviced regularly. Check your local city codes.

You Could Be LIABLE for Not Protecting the Environment

Local and state agencies have legal jurisdiction and enforcement authority to ensure that sewage spills are remedied.

They may respond and assist with containment, relieving pipe blockages, and/or clean-up of the sewage spill, especially if the spill is flowing into storm drains or onto public property.

A property owner may be charged for costs incurred by these agencies responding to spills from private properties.