

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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“Be Cautious What Goes Into the Waste Stream”

Residents need to be aware that they cannot flush towels, diapers or other large objects down their toilets. Six homes were flooded with sewage May 10 as a result of a blockage in the sewer main in the area of the intersection of Georgia Avenue and 11th Street in Norfolk.

According to Dennis Watts, City of Norfolk Water and Sewer Division Manager, a customer called city officials at 8:30 am and city crews went immediately to the location, identified the specific problem area and cleared the blockage in the line by 8:55 am.



Watts said members of the sewer division routinely clean and maintain the sewer lines in the City and this particular line had its latest routine cleaning in June 2012.

“We cleaned the line with pressure applied by sewer jetting equipment. The obstruction broke loose and flowed down the sewage system so we aren’t sure what caused the blockage. We do know that people need to be very careful as to what they put in the sewage stream. In the past we’ve found towels, diapers and even a wedding dress that had entered the sewage system,” Watts said.

City officials were contacting homeowners in the area of the blockage to make sure they checked for any sewage they might have in their homes.

The City of Norfolk has approximately 127 miles of sanitary sewer and 123 miles of water main. All of this pipe is subject to damage by outside forces including unsuspecting backhoe operators, soil conditions and misuse.

“The City staff does their best to ensure that the sanitary sewer lines are operating effectively. All of those lines are cleaned every year with a high pressure jetter hose; however, we cannot control what is put into the sanitary sewers by the public. We have found wedding dresses, rags, towels and grease in the sanitary sewers which can cause them to plug. When these sewers plug there is a chance that there could be a backup into a home,” Watts said.

Another cause of a backup of water into a home can be a torrential rainstorm including the ice storm that hit the Norfolk in April of last year. Watts said that in those instances the storm sewer system is not able to take care of all the rainwater so the sanitary sewer becomes overloaded and can cause a backup of water in a home.

There is a way to help prevent water backups. One way is to install a sanitary sewer backwater valve.

“These valves are relatively inexpensive and they basically work as a check valve. They will allow sewage to exit a property but will not allow water or sewer to enter the property due to reverse flow,” Watts said.