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PREVENTING SEWAGE BACKUPS IN NORFOLK

Often it's easy to think "out of sight, out of mind" when it comes to disposing waste into Norfolk's water lines. Unfortunately, that perspective can lead to a rather "messy" situation.

The City of Norfolk has approximately 137 miles of sanitary sewer and 127 miles of water main. City staff does their best to ensure that the sanitary sewer lines are operating effectively.

According to City of Norfolk Water Director, Dennis Watts, "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."

Residents need to be aware that towels, diapers, and other large objects cannot be flushed down the toilet.

"In the past we've found towels, diapers and even a wedding dress that had entered the sewage system," said Watts.

One way to help prevent sewer backups is to install a sanitary sewer backwater valve in the owners' sewer service line. According to section 715.7 of City Code, sewage back water valves should be installed as required when sewer service lines to existing structures are repaired or replaced. The valves are relatively inexpensive and work as a check valve. They allow sewage to exit a property, but will not allow water or sewer to enter the property due to reverse flow. This device is a very cost effective way to control backups from the City sewer main.

"We strongly encourage homeowners to install sewage backflow valves," Watts said. "Numerous cities across the country have the same issues as Norfolk and many have enacted ordinances to mandate the installation of a sewer back water valve."

Watts also highly recommends that property owners talk with their insurance agent to find out what coverage they have.

"When looking at home insurance it is important to make sure that you understand if you have coverage, not only for sanitary sewer backups but also backups due to storm sewers and other water disasters," said Watts.

For more information about back water valves, citizens may contact the Water Division at 402-844-2210.