



# Township of Woodbridge

John E. McCormac, CPA, Mayor

Department of Health and Human Services

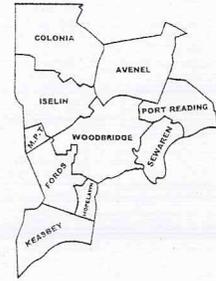
Division of Environmental Services

Dennis M. Green, Director of Health

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Woodbridge - Ten Towns, One Community

## The Occurrence of Odors in Basement and Cellars

The occurrence of unusual odors in a homeowner's basement may happen in a number of ways. The most common way odors gain access to your basement is through an opening in your sanitary sewer system connection. These openings may be a floor drain in your basement or an inadequately sealed cap on your sewer clean out. The source of the odors may be from the main sewer itself, which produces a sulfur or rotten egg odor, or from a multitude of other sources connected to the sewer system. Whenever a homeowner detects an unusual odor in the basement, this department recommends the following procedures:

1. Ventilate basement area by opening windows and doors to basement and sealing off upstairs rooms to prevent odors from entering them.
2. If you suspect the odors of natural gas, gasoline, or another type of flammable gas, contact your local Fire Department immediately.
3. Contact the Streets and Sewers Department at 732-738-1311 and request A township crew to flush the main line of all odors, which may be entering your basement.
4. Homeowners may be able to stop or prevent odors from entering basement from the clean out by insuring that the cap is tight and secure. Also, check the floor drains occasionally because water evaporates from the floor drain trap and allows odors to enter the basement. By pouring a couple of gallons of water into this drain, the trap will again function properly.
5. If odors continue, contact a licensed plumber as soon as practical to check your home's sewer connection and lateral sewer line (which runs from your home to the township main sewer line) for proper operation of your plumbing system.

If further assistance is needed concerning the occurrence of unusual odors in your basement and means to alleviate them, you may contact the Health Department at (732) 855-0600, Ext. 5027, as well as the Engineering Department at (732) 634-4500 Ext. 4700. Thank you for your cooperation.

## DO YOU HAVE A SEWER PROBLEM?

We are aware that, despite our many efforts, there are still homes in the community that have drainage and sanitary sewer problems. With this in mind, we have prepared the following suggestions with the hope we can help prevent or eliminate some of them.

Many of the problems of back-up sanitary sewers are presently being worked on by the Township. However, some have existed, and may continue to exist, for some time before a solution is found. It is essential that the homeowner attempt to protect himself for such problems. Generally, the remedies are relatively inexpensive; usually the expense involved is less than the damage that one backup causes.

### FAULTY CELLAR DRAINAGE

A number of homes in the Township have water in the cellar during or after a rainstorm. Our clay soil and high water table make it virtually impossible to prevent some water from entering a cellar. Under no circumstances should this water be discharged to the sanitary sewer. It will merely add additional storm water to the township's already overburdened sanitary sewers. Remember, if you have an opening, which permits drainage to flow to the sanitary water, it's an opening that can let sanitary sewage back into your cellar.

The proper way to get rid of cellar drainage is to use a sump pump to discharge the drainage to the curb. It should never be discharged to a sink or any other opening into the sanitary sewer. A length of plastic or rubber hose will readily carry the water to the street. Most cellars will have either a sump pit or a depression at the sanitary sewer trap where the pump can be placed. In a few instances, it may be necessary to make a hole for the pump in the cellar floor. REMEMBER... IT SHOULD DISCHARGED OUT TO THE STREET.

Sanitary sewer problems are generally caused by a few different reasons. All can be cured. The common problems are:

1. Sewage backup through the cellar drain.

**SOLUTION: PLUG IT PERMANENTLY.** Use a good tight plug that either your plumber or you can install for a few dollars. New homes in the Township are not permitted to have cellar drains.

2. Sewage back-ups through the sanitary sewer trap.

**SOLUTION: INSTALL TIGHT SOLID CAPS.** Your sewer caps should not have holes in them; they are not to be used to drain your cellar. If they have holes or do not screw tight, replace them with new ones.

3. Sewage back-ups through toilets, bathtubs or shower drains.

**SOLUTION:** Generally, the homeowner will not want to eliminate the fixture; the best solution is to install a backwater valve in the plumbing. Contact your plumber for advice as to cost and the proper location. The advantage of a good, well-maintained backwater valve is that it will work even if no one is home. It does not require manual turning, but will shut tight if sewage begins to back up.

4. Sewage backups into a sink.

**SOLUTION:** A backwater valve can be installed but in the times a week, a small valve can be turned on and off, and can be placed in the drain line. This should be quite inexpensive.

5. Sewage back-ups in the drain stone around the trap.

**SOLUTION:** There probably is an opening in the sewer, possibly under the cellar slab. The best solution would be to find and plug this opening. Try digging around the stone in the trap and see if the opening is right there. If the opening can't be found, the solution is to install a backwater valve.

Generally, sewer back-ups occur during rainstorms because sewers are too loaded to take the flow. The suggestions we have made should be useful in reducing sewer back-ups.

We also offer you the services of the Township's Division of Engineering. The Division of Engineering can be called at (732) 634-4500, Ext 4700 from the hours of 8:30 am to 4:30 pm weekdays. If you are unable to call and would like to write a letter, please address it to:

Division of Engineering  
1 Main Street  
Woodbridge, NJ 07095



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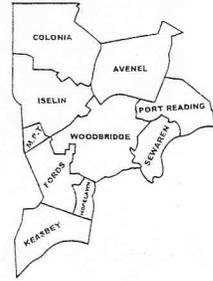
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Dear Resident,

The information listed below is to advise you on how to sanitize your basement if a sewer back-up has occurred. Items having come in contact with the sewage back-up should be washed with a sanitizer and water.

1. Use bleach and water, a mixture of one (1) tablespoon of bleach for each one (1) gallon of water. Use lukewarm water for this mixture.
2. Any food that has been touched by the sewage back-up should be considered **contaminated**. *Do not eat this food*. This food should be discarded.
3. After clean-up has been completed, all clothes wet from sewage should be washed as usual.
4. Be sure to wash your hands *very well* before preparing and/or eating foods.
5. Keep hands *away* from mouth until they have been thoroughly washed with soap and water.

Should you have any questions, please call the Health Department at (732) 855-0600 Ext. 5027. Thank you for your cooperation.