GUIDEONE INSURANCE + SafeChurch

Water Damage Prevention: Storm and Sanitary Sewer Backup

Storm and sanitary sewer backup losses can cause damage to building foundations, walls, floor coverings, appliances, and equipment. Raw sewage is a health hazard and is extremely costly to clean up. Loss of use of the building for an extended period during clean up and repair also is inevitable

Take the following precautions to prevent water damage to your building from storm or sanitary sewer backup:

- Do not dispose of grease through the sink or toilets.
- Use strainers in sinks to catch food scraps and dispose of them in the garbage.
- Do not flush solid waste, such as disposable diapers and personal hygiene products, down the toilet.
- Never connect floor drains, drain tiles, downspouts, or sump pumps to the sewer line. Such connections may cause sewage to back up into the building.
- Do not plant deep rooted landscapes on top of or next to the sewer laterals (the connection between your building and the public sewer line). If the roots penetrate the sewer line, they can restrict or even block the sewer line.
- If your sewer system doesn't have a cleanout, have one installed to allow access to clear any blockage in the line.
- Install a sump pump. Sump pumps will remove water from the building's foundation drain tile through a discharge tube outside of the building.
    - Hire a qualified plumbing contractor to install the sump pump.
    - Because severe storms may result in power failure, a battery-powered backup sump pump is highly recommended.
- Install a backflow prevention device, which will prevent raw sewage from an overloaded main sewer line from backing into the building's drainage system.
    - Hire a qualified plumber to install the device according to local building codes.



Example of a Typical Sump Pump

- Recycle yard waste. Raking or blowing leaves, grass clippings, and small tree limbs into the street allows this material to enter the storm sewers, which can cause them to back up.

Basements

- Keep valuable items on shelves and off the floor to prevent damage to valuable interior contents.
- Better yet, keep important documents, valuables, or hard to replace items out of the basement.
- Consider flooring that is not susceptible to water damage, such as ceramic tiles.
- If you have an exterior basement stairwell, make sure the door is adequately caulked and weather stripped to prevent water from penetrating. (These are prime areas for water to accumulate from surface runoff from heavy rains.)



This photo is an example of a church's basement where there is a potential for flooding to occur. If installing shelving in these types of areas, make sure they are well off the floor. The shelves in this photo may still be too low to the floor.

Not only is damage from storm and sanitary sewer backup costly to clean up, but it can have a tremendous effect on your ministry, depending on where the damage has occurred in your building. To prevent damage from sewer backup, it is important to follow these recommended precautions and to do routine checks at least twice each year to look for things that could cause a backup to occur.

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