



## SEWER LATERALS

# Sewer Laterals: What Are They and Who Is Responsible for Maintenance?

Private sewer service laterals, which typically are not under the jurisdiction of public wastewater agencies, are not always sufficiently maintained and can contribute to inflow and infiltration (I/I) problems, cause blockages and play a role in sanitary sewer overflows. In the City of Salinas privately owned homes and businesses are responsible for repair and maintenance of the entire lateral including the Y that is attached to the City main sewer line in the street. Salinas like other public agencies are required by the State Water Resources Control Board to manage and maintain the public portion of wastewater systems to minimize the likelihood of sanitary sewer overflows. Regular maintenance of the City owned sewer lines typically includes scheduled cleaning and inspections. Below are two sections on responsibility in the City of Salinas ordinance. All City of Salinas municipal ordinances are located at <http://www.ci.salinas.ca.us/> under Chapter 36. Wastewater.

### **Sec. 36-13. Owner responsible for costs**

All costs and expense incident to the installation, connection and maintenance of the building sewer shall be borne by the owner. The owner shall indemnify the city from any loss or damage that may directly or indirectly be occasioned by the installation of the building sewer. (Ord. No. 1870 (NCS), § 3.)

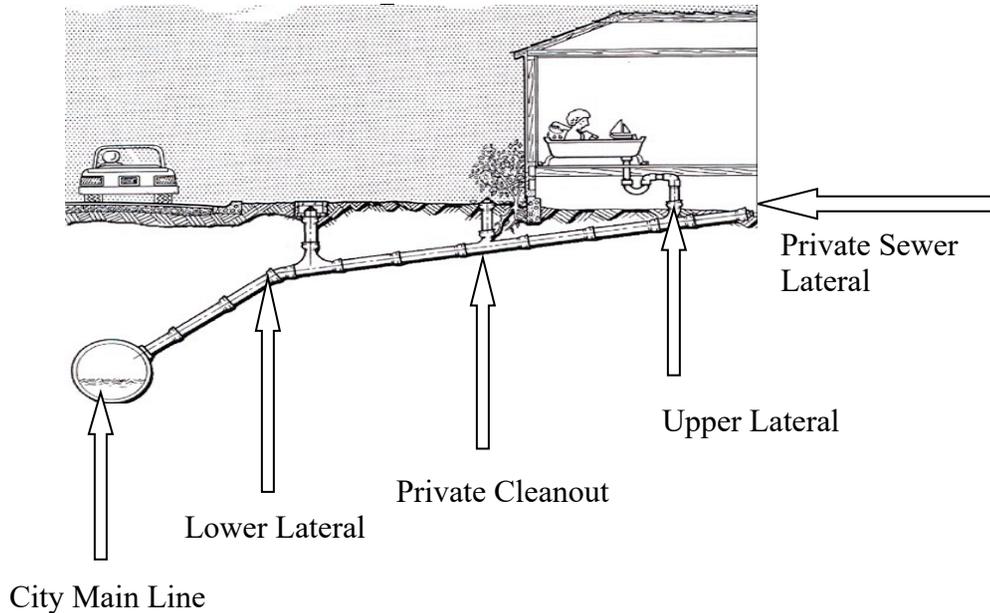
### **Sec. 36-18. Applicable construction codes for sewer connection**

The connection of the building sewer into the public sewer shall conform to the requirements of the city building and plumbing code has currently in effect and to the city design standards and standard specifications currently in effect. All such connections shall be made gastight and watertight. Since the connections are required to be gastight and watertight, infiltration of tree roots into a building sewer lateral are presumed to be caused by improper installation and shall be repaired by the property owner or responsible individual at no cost to the city, regardless of whether the building sewer is located on public or private property. (Ord. No. 1870 (NCS), § 3; Ord. No. 2102 (NCS).)

## **What is a sewer lateral?**

The private sewer service lateral (also known as a private lateral) is a pipe that takes an individual building's wastewater to the public sewer main in the street. These private laterals are owned by the building owner and are essential for directing wastewater away from homes, churches, schools and businesses to a publicly owned wastewater collection and treatment system.

As illustrated in the diagram, there are both upper and lower private laterals. The upper lateral runs from the home or business to a cleanout at the sidewalk or sometimes the property line. The lower lateral runs from the cleanout to the sewer main in the street. **If no cleanout is in place, the private lateral is usually not considered split between upper and lower portions.**



## Why are un-maintained sewer laterals, cause for concern?

Many older homes still rely on original sewer laterals that over time have become cracked, disjointed or damaged by roots, earth settlement or grease blockages. Un-maintained private laterals that become blocked or fail can contribute to sanitary sewer overflows of the public sewer system or to sewage backups into the building served by the private lateral. Some of the causes for concern for un-maintained private laterals are described below.

1. Root intrusion into the private lateral can contribute to sanitary sewer overflows. Root intrusion occurs when the private lateral leaks from cracks caused by earth settlement and leaking joints. Roots are attracted to the moisture and grow into the cracks or leaking joints causing blockages.
2. Grease buildup in the private lateral (like plaque in a person artery) can cause blockages that potentially result in on-site sanitary sewer overflows or backups of wastewater into the building that is served by the blocked private lateral. Homeowners are encouraged not to pour cooking oil, grease, or greasy food down the drain. These materials will cool and harden in the sewer line. Pour cooled grease and oils into the garbage if it's solidified.

Property owners are encouraged to inspect their private lateral at least once every five to ten years to determine if it is defective or if blockage is building up in the line. If a problem exists, a contractor should be hired to correct the problem.

For any information concerning sanitary sewers please call the City of Salinas Wastewater Division at 758-7103 or 758- 7233