

# Sewer Project FAQs

## 1. Our Program

### a. Why is this project required?

*Lower Paxton Township is continuing its compliance with its Consent Decree and Agreement (COA) with the PA Department of Environmental Protection. The COA requirements include the elimination of sanitary sewer overflows and the reduction of the hydraulic overload in the sanitary sewer system. The primary objective of this and other sanitary sewer projects throughout the Township is to reduce the surface water inflow and groundwater infiltration (I&I) that causes the sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) and hydraulic overload in the system.*

### b. What is the benefit of this program?

*The primary benefit to the community is the elimination of SSOs, which result in a discharge of raw sewage into nearby streams, rivers and other bodies of water. Due to the presence of bacteria and viruses in the raw sewage, SSOs can have a significant impact on public health and the environment. A secondary benefit to residents is that in most situations, the sewer located between your house and the mainline will be replaced as part of our project. This should eliminate the burden of future replacement from the property owner. Other public works facilities, such as the street, curb, sidewalk, and ADA curb ramps will also be replaced as part of this project.*



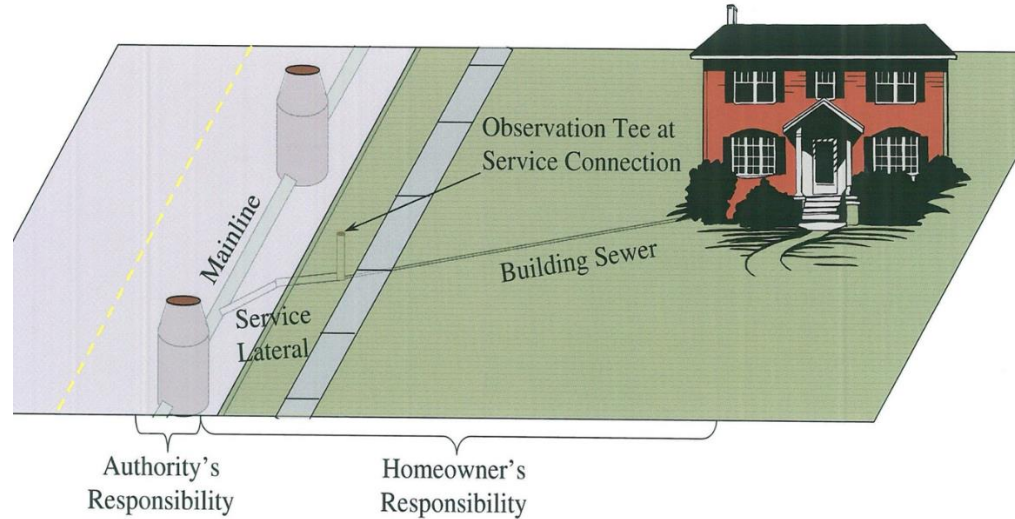
*Photo showing sanitary sewer overflow out of a manhole*

## 2.) Preliminary Items

### a. What portion of the sanitary sewer system does the Township own?

*The Lower Paxton Township Authority owns and maintains the mainline sewer. The property owner is responsible for ownership and maintenance of the sanitary sewer lateral and building sewer from the connection in the mainline to the house. Consequently, if the mainline is located in the middle of the street and the lateral sewer fails prior to the*

connection with the mainline, the property owner would be responsible for hiring a contractor to excavate and replace this pipe along with restoring asphalt paving, concrete sidewalks, ADA Curb ramps and curbs to the minimum Township specifications. In other words, a failure in the private lateral sewer could end up placing a significant financial burden on the property owner.



*Photo showing ownership and maintenance responsibilities of sanitary sewer*

**b. How does the Township secure permission to enter onto private property?**

*The private sewer lateral running between the mainline and the house is replaced under the terms of the Private Sewer Agreement (PSA). The PSA provides the Township or its contractor with permission to access the property and replace the private sewer and perform the necessary restoration work on private property. The PSA provides a temporary easement which remains in effect until the work is finished. If the Township needs to access private property for the replacement of its mainline sewer, we will negotiate temporary and permanent easements directly with property owners.*

**c. Who owns the new lateral pipe when it is replaced?**

*After replacement has been completed, the responsibility for maintenance of the private sewer shall remain with the property owner.*

**d. What portion of the cost must the homeowner cover?**

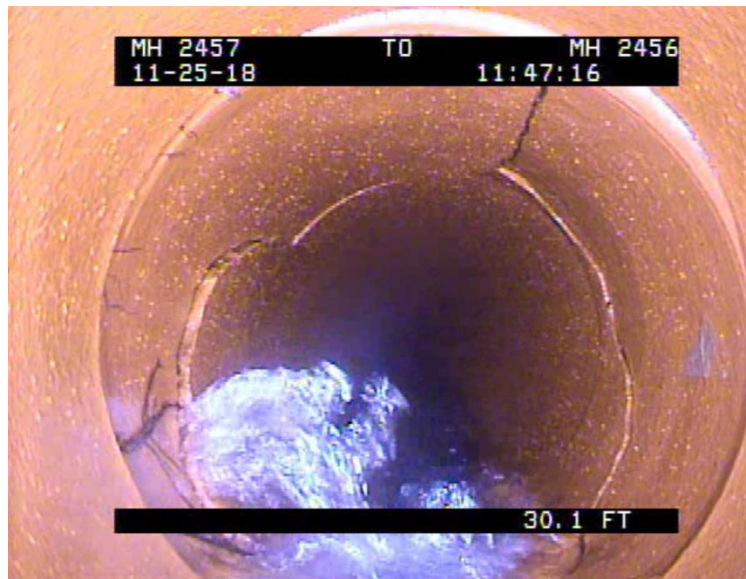
*All work is performed free of charge.*

**e. Sure, no cost now, but won't I eventually pay for it through sewer rental fees?**

*It is correct that the revenues generated from sewer user fees are used to fund these projects. However, users of the sanitary sewer system pay uniform rates and not every property is included in a project area. In other words, a property owner will pay the same sewer user fee regardless of if their lateral is included in a project or not.*

**f. My pipe isn't broken, why should my property be included?**

*Compliance with the Township's COA requires the replacement of private sewers. If your sewer lateral is newer PVC pipe, it will be tested by the Township or its contractor to determine the scope of replacement. If the private sewer is of any other material the Township will require its full replacement without testing. Often there are underlying issues with these private sewers that might not be evident to property owners. All buried pipe has a finite lifespan and will eventually need to be replaced. Additionally, once the surrounding pipe is replaced and watertight, groundwater migration could cause your pipe to leak.*



*Photo showing defects leading to active groundwater infiltration*

**g. What if I decide to opt out?**

*Property owners wishing to opt out of having the Township's contractor perform the work can hire their own contractor to perform the work on their property. The Township will provide reimbursement calculated based on the most recent bid pricing received and the eligible work performed. Property owners should be aware that due to the economies of scale, the pricing received from the Township's contractors is generally more cost competitive than pricing offered by a private contractor. If the property owner fails to PSA after the time specified, the Township will move forward with the condemnation process.*

**h. I am very attached to a tree that is scheduled to be removed, what can I do?**

*Under certain circumstances, the property owner can provide a release and waiver of liability for trees that the Township determines should be removed during construction.*

**i. I have a sump pump connected to the sewer, what should I do?**

*Sump pumps cannot be connected to the sanitary sewer system. The property owner will be responsible for disconnecting the sump pump by rerouting the discharge to the outside*

*of the home or building. Lower Paxton Township will provide reimbursement up to \$800 if the work is performed in a timely fashion. Contact the Sewer Operations Facility at 717-657-5623 for more information.*

**j. Why do I need a house inspection, doesn't the Township know where my sewer comes out of my house?**

In most cases we do not have accurate records for the location of private laterals located on private property. Our records show where the sewer lateral is connected into our mainline, but we cannot assume that the pipe was installed at a straight line between the house and the mainline. Additionally, there is no guarantee that the original pipe location is the current pipe location due to repairs or replacements over the years. Our I/I Coordinator will conduct house inspections that take less than an hour. During the inspection, the I/I Coordinator will sketch the approximate location of the private sewer lateral in relation to other features on the property and determine if any trees need to be removed.

**k. Do I need to be home for the house inspection?**

*Yes, the I/I Coordinator will need to access the house to determine where the private sewer lateral is leaving the house.*

**l. How do I schedule a house inspection?**

*House inspections can be scheduled by contacting the Sewer Operations Facility at 717-657-5623.*

**m. I have a fence installed over top of the sewer, what should I do?**

*We recommend that the property owner have the fence removed during construction and replaced after restoration is completed. The Township's contractor will perform this service, but they generally specialize in excavation and not fence installation. There is no guarantee that they will be able to remove and reinstall the fence to its original condition.*

**n. I know where my sewer comes out of my house and there is a structure (patio, porch, deck, pool, shed, etc.) located on top of it. What can I do?**

*In some cases the sewer can be rerouted internally or relocated externally to divert the lateral around an obstacle. The I/I Coordinator will review this when they perform the house inspection. In most cases, it is not cost effective for the Township to replace the pipe located under a structure.*

**o. I just purchased my property and hear that construction is coming, what should I do?**

*If you have not yet received a PSA in the mail, contact the Sewer Operations Facility at 717-657-5623.*

**p. I have a preexisting drainage issue on or near my property, what should I do?**

*Photo or video documentation is helpful in determining the underlying cause and the potential fix. We encourage residents to collect as much data as possible on the issue before contacting the Lower Paxton Township Public Works Department at 717-657-5615.*

### 3.) During Construction

**a. How can I stay informed on construction progress and road closures?**

*The Township uses the CivicReady Mass Notification System to provide updates on its construction projects. Residents can download the AlertMe – Regroup App on their smartphone. When creating an account, residents will have the option to select from a variety of notification options (including what type of information they would like to be notified with, for example Sewer, Township Events, Just Emergencies, etc). Be sure to select the Sewer option. If you do not have a smartphone and wish to be notified via email or landline, please visit <https://lowerpaxtontownship.regroup.com/signup> and create an account.*

**b. There are a lot of workers out here, are they Township employees?**

*In most cases, the Township bids its projects and retains a general contractor for the work. That general contractor often uses a mix of its own employees and subcontractors to complete the work. However, a Lower Paxton Township employee is never far from the action as we require full time inspection of every foot of pipe installed. You can identify the Township staff with the safety green/yellow uniforms with “Lower Paxton Township Sewer Department” logo (see below). They will do their best to answer your questions or direct them to the appropriate staff.*



*Lower Paxton Township Sewer Department Uniform*

**c. Why does the Township have so much inspection?**

*Our COA requires proven results and we believe that full time inspection of underground utility installation is paramount to achieving these results. Due to municipal procurement requirements, our projects are performed by the low-bid contractor. There is a lot of pressure on these contractors to perform and be profitable, which can lead to cutting corners or taking shortcuts. Once these shortcuts are buried they may not be evident right away, but they will show up in the future. The money invested in upfront inspection to ensure that projects are constructed properly is a good investment when compared to the significant future cost to correct an issue the second time around.*



*Once buried, it is difficult to identify issues with underground utilities*

**d. Where can I obtain information on the materials being used to restore my yard?**

*Our grading and seeding policy is available at the following website:*

<https://lowerpaxtonatwork.com/sanitary-sewer>

**e. The Contractor seems to have abandoned my area for a while and then they came back. How is this cost effective for the Township?**

*Each contractor approaches our projects differently. Some will focus on the installation of mainline and designate different crews for replacement of private sewers. This can appear as if they are jumping around, but they are not. These projects are paid on a unit cost bid pricing, so the Township is paying based on the quantity of material installed rather than how many hours it takes to install the materials. Also, with underground construction there are a number of unforeseen conditions that we encounter. The installation of gravity sanitary sewers is not flexible, so if we encounter a utility conflict, it could require the relocation of the utility in conflict which can be a lengthy process.*

**f. How will I be able to get to my house with these road closures?**

*The contractor is required to maintain access to homes during construction to the fullest extent possible. There can be times, especially when the street in front of your house is being paved, when access is severely limited. We recommend that you find a Lower Paxton Township employee in the safety green uniform to assist you with access issues. If you call the Sewer Department, we will call one of these employees, so it saves everyone time if you can track one down in the field.*

**g. My property pin was removed by the contractor during construction, who is responsible to replace it?**

*If Lower Paxton Township can confirm that the contractor's work could have resulted in the removal of a property pin, the contractor will be responsible for having the pin replaced. Property owners should notify the Township Sewer Department as soon as they become aware of this property damage. Visit <https://lowerpaxtonatwork.com/sanitary-sewer> for the appropriate contact person.*

**h. Will I be reimbursed if I restore my own lawn or concrete sidewalk?**

*Property owners can hire their own contractor to perform this work on their property. The Township will provide reimbursement calculated based on the most recent bid pricing received and the eligible work performed. Property owners should be aware that due to the economies of scale, the pricing received from the Township's contractors is generally more cost competitive than pricing offered by a private contractor.*

**i. I have noticed property damage to my house after the sanitary sewer project. What should I do?**

*The Township's contractors are required to purchase and maintain insurance policies appropriate for the work. Property owners should notify the Township Sewer Department as soon as they become aware of any property damage. Visit our website at <https://lowerpaxtonatwork.com/sanitary-sewer> for the appropriate contact person.*

**j. An area of my yard is consistently wet after the installation of my lateral. What should I do?**

*The purpose of the Township's project is to remove I/I from the sewer system. Occasionally groundwater that was entering the defective sanitary sewer pipe before our project will surface on a property after the work is completed. This is an unintended consequence of the work that is required by our COA. Property owners are encouraged to contact the Township's Sewer Department to confirm that the wet area is in fact groundwater and not an issue with the new pipe. Once it is confirmed to be groundwater, the property owner will be responsible for fixing the issue if they desire.*

**k. My lawn settled after final restoration. What should I do?**

*Property owners should notify the Township Sewer Department as soon as they notice the settled area. The contractor will be required to fix this issue if the project is active or the maintenance bond is still in place. It is important that the property owner report the*

settlement as soon as they notice it so that it can be repaired at the contractor's expense and not at the expense of the Township. Visit <https://lowerpaxtonatwork.com/sanitary-sewer> for the appropriate contact person.

**l. I smell sewer gas in my house, what should I do?**

*A dry trap is often the culprit of sewer gas entering the house. Depending on the configuration of the lateral, the act of the contractor flushing the sewer can displace the water in the fixture trap and allow sewer gases to enter the house. If the property owner can locate the source of the sewer gas in the house and run water at the fixture to fill the trap, the issue should be resolved. If this does not work, contact the Township Sewer Department so that they can check the outside cleanouts and confirm that the new sewer is functioning properly.*

**m. Why doesn't my new concrete sidewalk or driveway match the existing concrete?**

*Over the years, concrete fades due to a variety of reasons including weather, moisture and foot/vehicle traffic. It is not cost effective for our contractor to match each existing concrete color.*

**n. How soon will my driveway or street be paved?**

*Paving restoration will be performed after at least 30 days has passed to allow for settlement of the trench. If the asphalt is disturbed during the winter months when hot mix asphalt material is not readily available, the area will be restored as soon as the next paving season begins.*

**o. Can I bury the metal cleanout cap installed near my house?**

*The metal panella cap near the house is provided to the property owner to protect the PVC stack pipe from getting damaged. This cleanout provides access for cleaning and inspecting the private sewer lateral in the future. Therefore, we do not recommend burying it.*