



Water-In-Basement Customer Service Program



INTRODUCTION

The Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati's (MSD) public sewer system serves homes and businesses throughout Hamilton County. Established more than 100 years ago, it has been improved and expanded over time as the county developed and people moved to the suburbs. Today, more than 3,000 miles of sewer pipe collect wastewater from 800,000 customers, channeling it to one of 7 centralized treatment facilities.

On a typical dry weather day, wastewater flows into and through MSD's public sewers without problem. However, during wet weather, some parts of the sewer carry large amounts of rainwater in addition to wastewater. If the combined amount of rainwater and wastewater flowing into and through these public sewers is more than the pipes can handle, the water stops flowing smoothly and begins to back up. When a sewer backs up, the excess water is pushed out of the pipe through any available opening. Sometimes it overflows through manhole lids into neighborhood streets and nearby creeks. And in some places, it backs up into the lateral drain pipes leading from homes or businesses, flooding basements and other building spaces with the rainwater/sewage mixture.

MSD's new Water-In-Basement (WIB) Customer Service Program is designed to address and correct this problem. Customer service representatives are now available to help eligible WIB customers get their basements or lower levels cleaned up, file property damage claims, and take steps to prevent the problem from happening again. MSD's goal is to completely eliminate these backups. To achieve this, each WIB property in the system must be identified and remedied. This process may be lengthy, but MSD is committed to solving all WIB problems.



WHERE TO CALL

If you are a Hamilton County resident or business owner and your basement has been flooded by water coming up through a floor drain, sink, bathtub, or toilet, you should report the problem to:

**MSD's Customer Call Center at
(513) 352-4900**

Operators are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to take your call.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

An MSD customer service representative will respond to your call as quickly as possible, usually within 4 hours. The representative will visit your home or business to determine if the public sewer is overloaded and causing the water to back up into your basement. If the problem is caused by overland/surface water flooding, a broken water pipe, or blocked drain pipes, they will advise you accordingly. MSD is not responsible for these types of water backups. If the public sewer IS the root cause, then the customer service representative will work with you to document the extent of the damage and make arrangements for a professional cleanup.

In order to make a proper assessment, the customer service representative must inspect the flooded area inside your home or building, itemize the contents, and photograph the damages. You will be asked to sign an access agreement giving the representative permission to enter and inspect the premises. You will also be asked to give the cleanup contractor permission to enter and perform the specified cleanup procedures.



ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE

MSD customers are eligible for WIB assistance if the cause of the problem can be traced back to MSD's sewers. (Remember, customers who have water inside their basements because of broken water pipes, blocked drain pipes on their property, or overland flooding are not eligible for WIB cleanup and claims assistance.) Here are some of the criteria used to determine the cause of water in a basement:

- Recent rainfall or snowmelt—water that backs up into a basement through a floor drain during a heavy rain storm or sudden snowmelt is likely to be related to an overloaded public sewer. On the other hand, water problems that occur during dry weather may not be related to the public sewer.
- Property history—if the property has a history of verified complaints about water in the basement, the current complaint may be related to the public sewer system.
- Neighborhood history—if the neighborhood has a history of known WIB problems, then the caller may have a legitimate sewer-related problem.
- Condition and capacity of sewers in the neighborhood.

- Visual inspection of the public sewer—MSD service crews can inspect the water flow in the public sewer to see if it is flowing freely or overloaded. If they see that the sewer is overloaded, they may conclude that the WIB is sewer related.
- Visual inspection of the land around the WIB—MSD service crews will inspect land conditions in the vicinity of the complaint for evidence of surface flooding from a swollen creek or drainage way, or excessive storm water runoff from roof drains or a neighboring structure. If they observe any of these conditions, they may conclude that the WIB is caused by overland/surface water flooding.
- Inspection of the drain pipes on the caller’s property—testing may show there is an obstruction in the drain pipe that is causing the backup in the basement, rather than a malfunction of the sewer line.

WIB CLEANUP

MSD will provide professional contractor services at no charge to you to clean up the effects of the water backup, unless the problem is caused by overland/surface water flooding, broken water pipes or blocked drain pipes on your property. A customer service representative will make arrangements to provide the following range of services, as needed, to correct each specific situation:

- Wet vacuuming or other removal of water and residues.
- Mopping bare floors with cleaning solution and disinfectant.
- Wiping walls with cleaning solution and disinfectant.
- Flushing out and disinfecting plumbing fixtures.
- Removal and disposal of damaged property.
- Basic carpet cleaning.

A customer service representative will review the procedures with you, along with the list of personal property that is scheduled for disposal. They will also ask for your authorization before scheduling the work.

Cleanup cannot begin until the water in your basement has recessed on its own. This could take several hours. The customer service representative will make a follow-up visit once the water has receded to monitor the cleanup, especially during removal of damaged property. After the cleanup is complete, they will help you assemble a damage claim for lost property, and provide information about the long-term prevention program.



WIB CLAIMS

Building materials, supplies, equipment, and personal property that have been damaged or lost during a WIB event are eligible for cost recovery. A customer service representative will help you understand how to fill out and file the WIB claim form. They will also provide copies of damaged property lists, photos, and other relevant information from your case file for use as supporting documentation in your cost recovery claim.

MITIGATING FUTURE LOSSES

MSD may ask property owners and occupants who have received compensation for damages under this program to take reasonable measures to mitigate future property damages. Such measures may include the following:

- Allow MSD to install on their property, at MSD expense, a backflow prevention device and agree to maintain such device in working order.
- Refrain for 2 years from storing personal property below a previously documented high water line, or less than 2 feet above the basement floor.
- Refrain for 2 years from installing new carpet or drywall below a previously documented high water line, or less than 2 feet above the basement floor.
- Other appropriate measures as recommended.

WIB PREVENTION PROGRAM

Your customer service representative will discuss options that may be available to prevent water-in- basement problems from ever happening again at each affected property. They will refer interested property owners to the WIB Prevention Program for engineering and construction assistance. Only the owner of a WIB property can approve physical changes to the property—such as installation of new piping and equipment—that will prevent future flooding. Such changes would be installed at MSD’s expense. However, after installation, the equipment would become the property of the owner, and the owner would be responsible for maintenance of the equipment.



SEWER BACKUPS

To report a sewer backup, you **MUST FIRST** call:

MSD’s Customer Call Center
513-352-4900

CLEANUPS

Once MSD has confirmed the backup is related to the public sewer, you will be referred to the Customer Service Program for cleanup assistance. If you have questions about your cleanup, call:

MSD’s Customer Service Program
513-771-WIB4
513-771-9424

CLAIMS

For claims information and forms, call:

513-771-5246

