

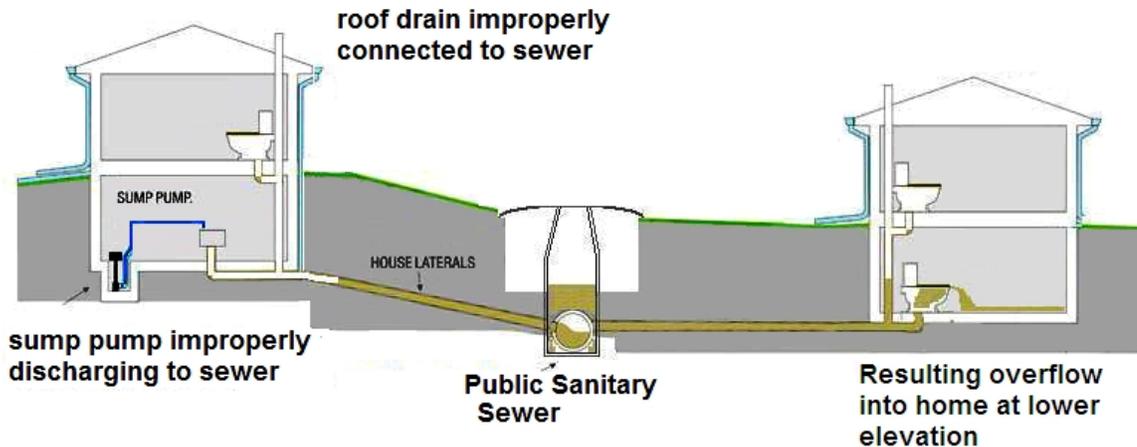
# How to Safeguard Your Home from Sewer Backups

## Improperly Connected downspouts and sump pumps--what are they?

Many older homes may have roof gutters and basement sump pumps connected directly to the sanitary sewer. This means that rain from the roof and ground water is pumped directly into the sewer.

### Why is this a problem?

The problem is too much water. Sanitary sewer systems are only large enough to handle the amount of water from normal household use in the kitchens and bathrooms. During a rainstorm, water gets into the sewer from connected down-spouts and basement sump pumps. When there is too much water for the system, the excess sewage has to go somewhere, and that somewhere is often somebody's basement or out a manhole in the street then to a nearby stream or river.



### Why should you care?

#### **Property Damage.**

Sewage overflows can result in thousands of dollars worth of property damage. When there is a sewer backup into a house, the homeowner may have to pay the cost to clean up, repair damage, and replace ruined carpets, wallboard and furniture. Basic home-owner's insurance often does not cover this damage (unless the policy has an added clause or "rider").

#### **Fines**

These types of connections have always been a code violation in Bristol. The City has recently adopted a new ordinance that can levy a fine of \$250 per month to any property owner that refuses to disconnect an improperly connected sump pumps or roof drains.

### What can you do?

1. Redirect improperly connected down-spouts and sump pumps away from the sanitary sewer. This is usually simple and relatively inexpensive.
2. Install a back flow preventer in your sewer pipe to prevent any sewage from the street pipe from backing up into your basement.
3. Speak to you homeowner's insurance agent about a sewer back up rider.
4. You can also let other people know why downspouts and sump pumps need to be disconnected and how sewer overflows are costly to the entire community.
5. If you are not sure where your downspouts or sump pump drain to, you can call the Sewer Department at 584-3821. We can inspect the pipes at no charge and provide advice on how to correct improper connections. No fines will be charged if you call and work with the City to relocate the connections.