What is a sewer backup?

The simplest explanation for a sewer back up in the house is a clog or blockage. A clog or blockage in the sewer service line of a house can lead to sewage from the house backing up and overflowing to a toilet, tub, sink or any drain in your home. The first drains to back up and overflow are usually the lowest drains in the house such as a basement floor drain.

This information is provided to help protect your home from damage and recovery from losses should they occur.
What should I do if I have a sewer backup event?

1. Don't run any water down any drain or toilet in your home until the clogs are cleared.
2. Try to contain the overflow to a confined area if possible. Remove or elevate any property that could come in contact with the spill area.
3. Check if neighbors are having any issues. This could indicate that the problem exists in the main line.
4. Call a plumber to assist with clearing the issue, closing your drains, and assessing the situation.
5. Call your utility to report the issue. They'll recommend action and check the main line for issues.
6. Call your homeowners’ insurance company to determine what coverage may be available.
7. Who pays to clean up the mess? In the vast majority of cases, you do. If the backup occurs in your service line or in the main line as a result of anything other than the utility’s negligence, it is ultimately your responsibility to clean up the mess and restore the line.

Your utility is not responsible for your lines, or for acts of nature or vandalism. In many cases, the utility will help coordinate clean up with a cleaning service to help minimize the damage, but the financial responsibility lies with you.

What can I do to safeguard my home from a sewer backup?
- Plumbers can assess your risk and install a back-flow valve to protect basements.
- Perform an annual video inspection and cleaning, if necessary, of the house sewer line.
- You can use grease-fighting liquid dish soap like Dawn® to break up grease blockages.
- Review the list on this flyer of items to never flush or wash down a drain.
- Make sure your homeowners insurance policy includes coverage for sewer backups.

What is Roxborough Water and Sanitation District doing to prevent these issues?

Unfortunately, even with regular scheduled maintenance, some backups are simply unavoidable. These include events caused by vandalism, infrastructure breakdown, ground movement, and natural disaster.

Fortunately the Roxborough Water and Sanitation District uses industry Best Practices to maintain our sewer collection mainlines to lessen the risk of a stoppage. Because of the size of the District’s collection system, one third of the system is cleaned and videoed every three years. This method allows for a complete collection system inspection every three years. The inspection process for the District’s entire collection system includes jetting (high pressure water cleaning), videos, root growth removal, point repairs, infiltration mitigation and complete manhole to manhole lining.