



Residential Pollution Prevention	RHP-07 Sanitary Sewer Laterals & Septic Tanks
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Description	<p>Property owners are responsible for the inspection, maintenance and repairs to the sanitary sewer laterals up to the connection with a sanitary sewer collector pipe. Those property owners on septic tank systems are responsible for maintenance and repairs to septic tank systems and associated drainfields.</p>
Design	<p>The definition of sanitary and septic waste includes, but is not limited to, the following items as listed in the Bowling Green Stormwater and Street Ordinance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Human wastes ➤ Wastewater from toilets, sinks, dishwashers, washing machines and other indoor plumbing fixtures ➤ Wastewater from kitchens and restaurants ➤ Wastewater from industries and commercial establishments <p>These types of wastes, as well as animal and pet wastes, carry harmful viruses and bacteria that spread disease. It is important to prevent direct and indirect human contact with these types of waste flows. Sanitary sewers are a vital part of American civilization and community health system but are seldom appreciated, noticed or maintained.</p> <p>Within the City of Bowling Green, most waste flows are discharged into sanitary sewers leading to wastewater treatment plants operated by the Bowling Green Municipal Utilities (BGMU), a publicly owned utility company. BGMU is independent from the City of Bowling Green and the Warren County governments. In addition to wastewater collection and treatment, BGMU also operates the water and electricity distribution network systems. See</p>



**Design
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the BGMU website www.bgmu.com or call (270) 782-1200 for additional information on wastewater services, fee structures, request for service, etc. Other wastewater system contacts in the area include BGMU Automated Customer Service: (270) 782-4301

- BGMU Power Outage Reporting System: (270) 782-4302
- BGMU Fax Number: (270) 782-4590
- BGMU Email Address: customerinquiry@bgmu.com

BGMU is located at 801 Center Street (P.O. Box 10300) Bowling Green, KY, 42102-7300. Their office hours are: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday.

Warren County Water District also operated a sanitary sewer system outside of the BGMU district. For questions in the jurisdiction call 842-0052.

**Sanitary
Laterals**

At a minimum, property owners should be aware of where sanitary sewer laterals are found on the property. Do not allow heavy vehicles or construction equipment to drive on top of sanitary sewer laterals. Do not plant large trees directly over or near to sanitary sewer laterals. Large tree roots can infiltrate and eventually break a sanitary sewer lateral so that it will not function.

Inspection and Investigation

- The following guidelines are helpful for inspecting and maintaining sanitary sewer laterals. These guidelines will help the property owner to protect a valuable utility asset, and will help to improve water quality in Bowling Green creeks and streams.
 - Find location of sanitary sewer laterals on the property.
 - Find location of sanitary sewer lateral connection to the main sewer.
 - Determine approximate date of construction and materials used.
 - Inspect lateral locations regularly for unusual odor or ground wetness.
 - Inspect lateral locations regularly for subsidence or unusual soil color.
- A leaking sanitary sewer lateral may be contributing flow to a nearby storm drain, ditch or creek. Inspect the nearest storm drain or ditch during dry weather to determine if there is a suspicious flow. Contact the Bowling Green Municipal Utilities to report illicit discharges, spills, leaks, or suspicious sanitary sewer discharges that need to be investigated. Anonymous calls are also handled.

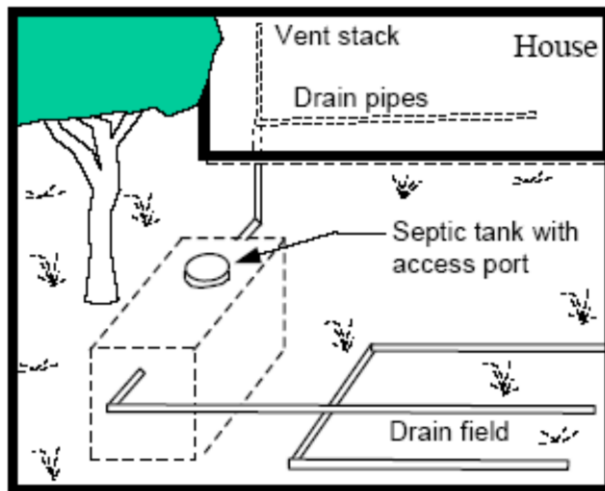
Other Considerations

- All temporary and permanent connections to the municipal sanitary sewer system must be inspected and approved by the BGMU plumbing inspector prior to installation. Contact the Inspections Office for construction procedures and testing requirements. Only use licensed plumbing contractors with adequate experience and equipment for each project.
- Older houses throughout the City of Bowling Green may have illicit connections, where a sanitary sewer line discharges into a storm drain. There are many reasons that this may have occurred, including:
 - Standard practice 50 to 100 years ago, where sanitary sewers did not exist.
 - A building contractor may have misidentified the connection pipe honestly.



**Sanitary
Laterals
(cont'd)**

- A building contractor may have taken a shortcut to save time & money.
- The storm drain contractor may have misidentified the sanitary sewer pipe.
- When found, cross connections must be replaced and repaired to function correctly. See [RHP-01](#) (Non-Stormwater Discharges to Storm Drains) for additional information on locating illicit discharges and cross connections. Smoke testing and dye testing are two common methods for BGMU to locate leaks in the main sanitary sewer system.
- Roof drains for older houses typically are connected to the sanitary sewer system (standard practice 50 years ago). Current standard procedures for roof drainage call for roof drains and gutters to be disconnected from the sanitary sewer system. Roof drainage is relatively clean water that is discharged directly onto the ground.



**Septic Tank
Systems**

- Existing privately-owned septic systems must be maintained in good working order. If a private septic system fails to function properly, then the owner may be required to hook into the municipal sanitary sewer system at their cost. Typically a septic tank needs to be inspected every year and pumped out every three years.
- Septic systems are not designed to process large volumes of water in short time periods. Do not wash several loads of clothes consecutively, and do not use excessive amounts of detergents that contain phosphorus. Do not pour household chemicals down the drain into a septic system; chemicals can kill the good microbes within the septic tank. Garbage disposals contribute to an overloading of solids in the septic tank, requiring more frequent cleanouts.
- Keep heavy equipment and vehicles away from septic tank and septic drain field. Do not compact soils in the septic field. Do not pave over the septic drain field. Adequate aeration and evaporation in drain field must occur for proper treatment.
- Inspect the septic tank and septic drainfield regularly to verify that sanitary and septic waste is not being discharged inadvertently. Inspection is normally done during dry weather to determine whether a discharge occurs. See [RHP-01](#) for methods to detect illicit discharges and leaks. Look for unusual odors, wet ground, discolored soil, subsidence or unusual settlement.



Safety Concerns

- Be careful investigating sanitary sewer lines or other confined spaces where sewer gases may exist. Sanitary sewer gases can render a person unconscious before being detected by normal senses. There are many instances of people being killed by falling unconscious into an open manhole due to sewer gases.
- Methane gas, along with other sewer gases, is very explosive. Keep sparks and open flames away from sewers, manholes and septic tanks. Do not smoke near open manholes.

Related BMPs

- GHP-10 Sanitary and Septic Waste Management
- RHP-01 Non-Stormwater Discharges to Storm Drains