

Fixing Your Side Sewer

IF MY SIDE SEWER NEEDS REPAIR, HOW DO I FIND SOMEONE TO DO THE WORK?

Companies can be found via the Internet or the local telephone directory by looking for the term “sewer contractor” or “drain cleaner”. Companies offer a full range of services, including unblocking, repairing and replacing side sewers, but some specialize in certain areas. Make sure to ask which services are provided. Ask friends and relatives for recommendations. Property owners may also check with the Better Business Bureau at 253-830-2924 to find reputable companies. Doing your homework pays off, we always recommend getting 3-5 bids from different contractors.

TYPES OF SEWER SERVICES:

Since companies offer a wide range of prices, it's a good idea to get at least three written bids before choosing a company

- **Drain cleaning services** unclog plumbing and private side sewers using water pressure or mechanical “snakes.” Make sure the cleaning service’s snake cable is long enough to reach from a property’s side sewer to the City’s main sewer line (typically underneath the street

or alley). Drain cleaning companies may also repair or replace side sewers.

- **Side sewer contractors** repair structural problems, such as breaks or holes, or replace side sewers. Some contractors also unclog lines.

- **Plumbers** repair leaky or broken fixtures, and they install systems in new construction and remodeling. If only some fixtures are not draining, or if pipes are leaking, a plumber might be able to remedy the problem.

CAN I FIX THE PROBLEM MYSELF?

If the property owner chooses to unclog the side sewer or make repairs to those portions of the side sewer located on private property, remember:

- **Unclogging a line:** A variety of tools and products can be found at local home improvement stores. Portable jetting or snake machines are available at many rental companies. Make sure to measure the distance between the building and the main line to determine what size machine to rent.

- **Repairing or replacing a broken or leaky side sewer line:** Property owners may work on their own private sewer system if repairs are located only on private property and not in the right-of-way. If work needs to be performed in the right-of-way, property owners must hire a licensed and bonded contractor.

DO I NEED A PERMIT IF I DO THE WORK MYSELF?

Permits are always required, on both private property and in the right-of-way, when performing repair work on side sewers or plumbing fixtures so construction inspectors can inspect the work and ensure it meets City standards. Permits are not required for root removal or unclogging services.

WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD TO FIX OR REPLACE MY SIDE SEWER?

The City offers low-interest sewer loans to qualified homeowners and business owners for side sewer repair or replacement. For information on applying for a Sewer Conservation Loan, call Site Development at 253-591-5760. The City of Tacoma also offers a Single-Family Residence Rehabilitation Loan, which is designed to assist low and moderate-income Tacoma homeowners in preserving the quality and stability of their home. Low-income households can inquire into the Home Rehabilitation Loan Program through Rebuilding Together South Sound at 253-238-0977.



Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.

More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | www.tacomapermits.org (253) 591-5030

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).

TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.