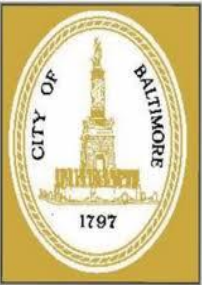


<b>FROM</b>	<b>NAME &amp; TITLE</b>	Matthew W. Garbark, Acting Director	CITY of <b>BALTIMORE</b>  <i><b>M E M O</b></i>	
	<b>AGENCY NAME &amp; ADDRESS</b>	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building		
	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>City Council Resolution 21-0016R</b>		

March 23, 2021

**TO:**

Health, Environment, and Technology Committee

I am herein reporting on City Council Resolution 21-0016R introduced by Council Members Burnett, Cohen, Dorsey, Porter, Middleton, Ramos, and Bullock.

The purpose of the Resolution is to invite representatives of the Departments of Public Works, Law, Health, and the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management to appear before the City Council to discuss the effectiveness and sufficiency of measures being taken to address basement backups of raw sewage in the City.

The prior term of the City Council held informational hearings on basement backups and the Sewage Backup Expedited Reimbursement Program, a pilot program established under the Modified Consent Decree.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the Department announced its intent to investigate and develop a new pilot program that would offer basement cleaning services to these impacted locations. We are pleased to report that Mayor Brandon Scott just announced the launch of the Sewage Onsite Support (SOS) Cleanup Program. The 12-month pilot program will provide professional cleaning, disinfection, and disposal services from a third-party vendor at no cost to Baltimore City residential customers impacted by capacity-related sewage backup damage caused by a wet weather event.<sup>2</sup> The application form and copies of the brochures can be found at this link: <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/soscleanup>

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<sup>1</sup> This program addresses basement backups caused by the combination of clear water entering sanitary sewers from precipitation and the lack of capacity of the public sewers to handle the flow. These twin causes can be identified by inspection of the sanitary pipes via manholes during the event, or by maintenance history, adjacent property issues, and rainfall data. The identification of capacity-limited sewer pipes under the Consent Decree and the verification data noted above, is what allows the program to expedite the reimbursement to the property owner, rather than having to file a general liability claim with the Department of Law.

<sup>2</sup> A wet weather event occurs when at least ¼ inch of precipitation is recorded within a 24-hour period. If there is a light rain for 2-3 hours, moderate rain for 30-60 minutes or heavy rain for 15 minutes, it is identified as a wet weather event.

The process to access the SOS Cleanup Program is simple:

- Baltimore City residents should call 311 to report a sewage backup as soon as it is discovered.
- After calling 311, a DPW inspector will be dispatched to investigate the sewage backup.
- Once the inspector or SOS administration team determines the backup was a result of a capacity-related wet-weather condition that overwhelmed the capacity of the City's sewer pipe, the customer will be offered information on the SOS Cleanup Program. SOS Program professionals are available from 8 a.m. to midnight to clean, disinfect, dispose of sewage contaminated items, and deodorize all exposed affected areas of the residence.
- DPW will not be the service provider for the SOS Cleanup Program. DPW will contact the third-party vendor and set up appointments for residents who have been approved for the program. These qualified residents will not receive a bill from the vendor for this service.<sup>3</sup>

If a qualified resident decides to not participate in the SOS Program, they still have the option to apply for the Sewage Backup Expedited Reimbursement Program. The Program offers up to a \$5,000 reimbursement per residence, per occurrence, for reasonable interior space cleanup and disinfection expenses. Additional information for this program can be found at the following link: <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/sewer-consent-decree/building-backups>

The Expedited Reimbursement Program and the SOS Program do not provide professional cleanup services or reimbursements for damage caused by sewage backups not related to a wet weather, capacity-related event, such as clogs caused by tree roots, fats, oils, and grease. However, these residents may file a general liability claim with the Baltimore City Law Department for losses related to these types of sewage backups.

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<sup>3</sup> The SOS Program does not offer property restoration or replacement of damaged personal belongings. The resident may file a general liability claim with the Law Department for these losses.

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of the Baltimore City Council  
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The Department of Public Works is addressing the causes of basement backups and sanitary sewer overflows through the following efforts: advancing the work performed under the Modified Consent Decree; opening of the Headworks project at the Back River Wastewater Treatment Plant; intensive, routine cleaning of the sanitary sewer system; reducing the disposal of Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) and non-flushable products into the sewer system through education and enforcement; and addressing the intrusion of roots into the sewer system with cutting and clearing, and applying chemicals that deter root growth.

Representatives will attend the hearing on City Council Resolution 21-0016R to provide any additional information requested, and to answer any questions the Committee may have on this topic.



Matthew W. Garbark  
Acting Director

MWG/MMC