

Claiming for wastewater blockages

Plumbers' guide to lodging claims

These guidelines aim to help licensed plumbers seek reimbursement from Sydney Water for costs for attending a private wastewater overflow.

1. The wastewater blockage claims process

We rely on the expertise and experience of licensed plumbers to help identify faults in our wastewater system.

When a licensed plumber has been called to a customer's property to investigate a wastewater (sewer) overflow and believes the issue is in the main Sydney Water system, the plumber must report the problem immediately to us, if they wish to make a claim. We'll send a team to verify that the blockage is in our system. Once we confirm this, the plumber can submit a claim for the plumbing costs incurred to clear the private blockage.

Plumbers can only claim from Sydney Water if they have not charged the customer.

If you're a plumber and want to claim your expenses from Sydney Water, you must follow the work sequence outlined here.

2. Claiming costs for a wastewater blockage

To enable our claims team to quickly and accurately assess your claim **you must**:

- attend the customer's property and notify us about the blockage, as soon as you realise it's in our wastewater system
- spend no more than two hours investigating the location of the blockage before calling us
- submit the claim within 60 days.

We'll reimburse you for the reasonable costs for a single visit if you're a licensed plumber (we'll check licence numbers). We may question your claim if you attended nearby properties at about the same time.

We won't reimburse you for:

- additional work done on the property's private plumbing service during the visit
- loss, damage or retrieval of equipment, eels or CCTV cameras
- location of private surface fittings.

Plumbers cannot be paid by both the customer and Sydney Water for the same work. If the blockage appears to be in our wastewater pipes, you should lodge a claim with us and **NOT** with the customer.

Excavation and CCTV

We'll only reimburse you for excavation or CCTV work if you obtain approval from our authorised representative before doing the work. Where we have approved excavation, we may reimburse you for road opening costs.

We won't pay for any excavation to locate the inspection opening for the private service. We also won't pay for any excavation of the wastewater junction, until we've inspected the main line.

Information you need to make a claim

For us to assess your claim, you must submit:

- an invoice with your licence number, ABN, invoice number and the total cost
- completed *Wastewater blockage claim form* including the customer's details
- a timesheet indicating your hours on-site and the work completed.

We won't process claims without this documentation.

3. Work sequence

By following this work sequence, plumbers and drainers can complete their work safely with minimal risk to themselves, customers and our staff. It also aims to ensure minimal disruption to our assets and services by:

- providing a high level of customer service
- avoiding harmful impacts on the environment
- minimising costs to both the property owner and Sydney Water.

Steps you must follow

If a customer asks you to investigate a blocked wastewater system, please complete the following activities in order:

Step 1 Determine the location of the wastewater surcharge. A continuous overflow from a gully or fitting, when no showers, toilets, washing machines etc. are in use, indicates the problem is with Sydney Water's wastewater system.

Step 2 Check for surcharges on neighbouring properties. If they are also experiencing problems, this indicates a problem with our wastewater system.

Step 3 If the surcharge is not continuous, you should use appropriate techniques (such as drain clearing equipment) to check and clear any blockages in the property's private service.

Step 4 If the property's service remains blocked after the above, call us on 13 20 90 to report the fault, so a maintenance crew can attend to clear our wastewater system. You'll need to provide your licence number, name and contact telephone number.

Do not begin any excavation before calling us, so we can inspect the main line.

After completing your work, you may then claim reimbursement by downloading and completing our *Wastewater blockage claim form* and timesheet sending it to us at wastewaterblockages@sydneywater.com.au

4. Reporting a wastewater blockage

When you report a wastewater blockage to **13 20 90**, we'll send a maintenance crew to assess the blockage. They'll locate and check our access chambers and jet the wastewater pipe using a high-pressure water jetter.

If they find that our wastewater pipe is clear and the customer's service is still blocked, this indicates the blockage is in the customer's private service. See section 5: The private service and Sydney Water, for information on blockages in and around junctions.

If the crew finds and clears a blockage in our wastewater system and you're not on-site, we may phone you to tell you the outcome. If they confirm that the blockage was in our wastewater system, you can submit a claim for assessment. You need to record the Sydney Water job number, which must be noted on your claim form.

5. The private service and Sydney Water

The junction is part of our wastewater system and is owned by us. However, the joint between the property owner's private service and our junction is, the property owner's responsibility (see figure 1 below).

The property owner is responsible for clearing any tree roots that enter at this joint and for any damage to the junction or junction collar caused by tree roots or excavation work.

If the junction has been damaged by work required to remove tree roots from the private service joint, we **may** replace or repair this junction. If we agree to replace the junction, the property owner must bear the costs of excavating the junction area to ensure the junction is fully exposed, and the work area made safe.

We may provide the junction replacement service at no cost to the customer. This is called a '**junction replacement without prejudice**' (See Figure 1a). We will not reimburse you for any costs associated with the work needed to expose the junction.

If you believe that the failure of our junction caused the blockage, our maintenance crew must confirm this by checking the condition of the damaged or broken junction, before we'll accept any responsibility. If the crew or an authorised representative of Sydney Water accepts responsibility, the crew will replace or repair the damaged junction, backfill, reconnect and restore the site at our cost. This is commonly called a '**takeover**' (See figure 1b) Where our authorised representative has approved the 'takeover', you can claim for reimbursement for liaising with us and for the excavation around the junction.

NOTE: If the private pipe work has been removed, we may replace the junction at our cost, but we won't reimburse you for the excavation and other costs. Our crews MUST verify the damage and the blockage.

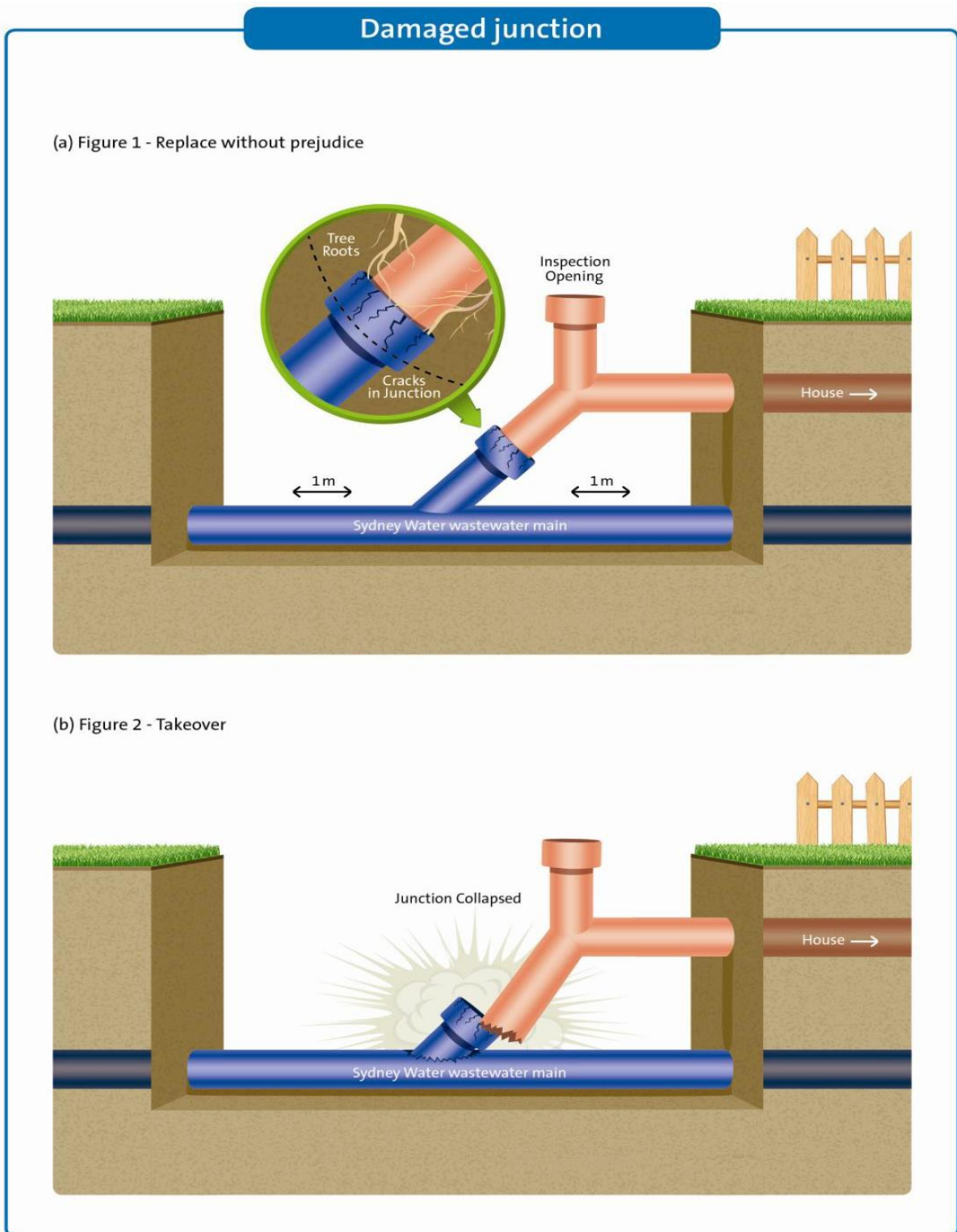


Figure 1 - Damaged junction

6. Properties connecting to Sydney Water sidelines

If the customer's property is connected to a sideline and our crew advises that our wastewater system is clear, we may try to clear the blockage from the customer's inspection point. This can reduce the overall cost of the job and minimise disruption for the customer.

If we clear the blockage, we'll then CCTV the line to determine what caused it.

Do not excavate until you receive approval from our authorised representative of Sydney Water.

We won't reimburse any costs for excavation unless you obtain this approval **BEFORE** doing any excavation.

7. Vacuum and low-pressure wastewater systems

Customers connected to low pressure wastewater systems should refer to the emergency response section of the *Low pressure wastewater guide for households*. If you attend a call to an area with a low pressure wastewater system, please ask the customer to call us on **13 20 90**.

8. Relined wastewater pipes and junction cut-outs

If you identify that the blockage is from an uncut junction, we'll arrange for the relining contractor to return and fix the junction.

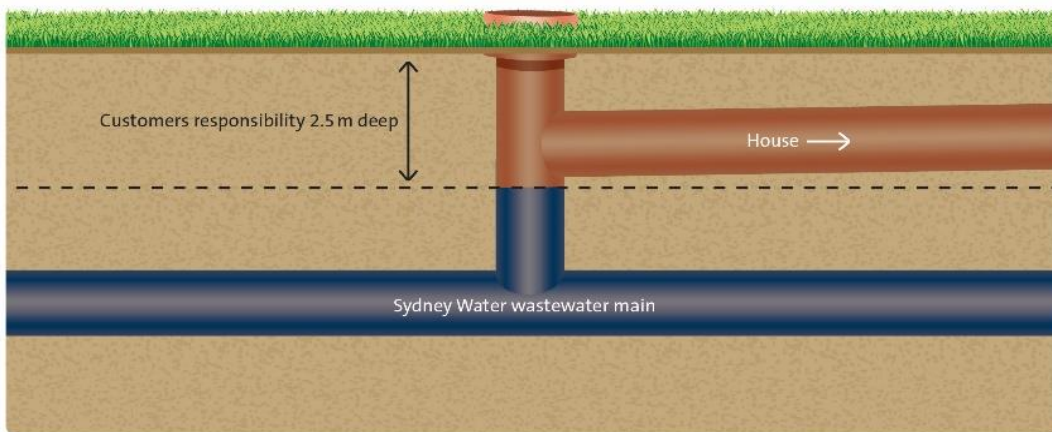
9. Connection points deeper than 2.5 m

We own all of the connection point to the main deeper than 2.5 metres. (See Figure 2 Vertical connection to a main).

This depth is measured at the time the wastewater system is installed and recorded on our system. If the contour of the land has changed over time (due to landscaping or other factors) and the connection point becomes deeper than 2.5 metres, we'll decide whether to accept or decline responsibility. If you're unsure, please call us on **13 20 90**.

Vertical connection

(a) Figure 3 - Surface level unchanged



(b) Figure 4 - Adjusted surface level

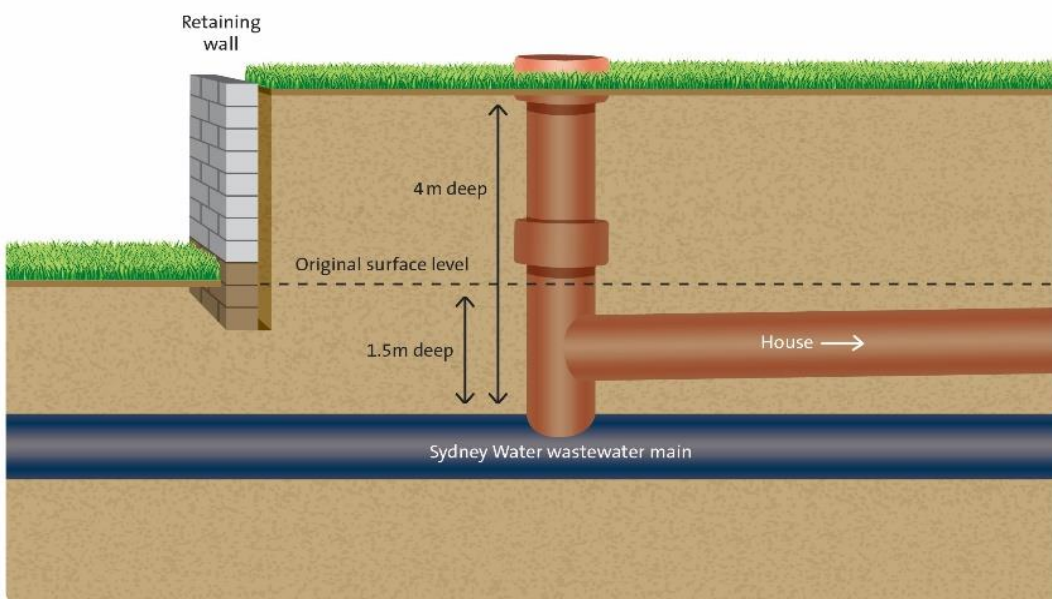


Figure 2 - Vertical connection to a main