

# Inspecting your side sewer...

## Get to know what's underground

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Side sewer repairs or replacement can be expensive – averaging \$5,000 to \$15,000 – and can often come as a surprise to property owners when sewage starts coming out of sinks, toilets, bathtubs and other building drains. Property owners should plan for side sewer maintenance and repair just as they do for replacement of roofs, furnaces and other major working systems of the building or residence.

**To avoid the surprise of costly repairs, the City of Tacoma recommends that property owners investigate the location and condition of their existing side sewer. This is especially important if the side sewer is more than 25 years old and/or does not have plastic PVC pipe running from the building to the City sewer main.**

### How do I find someone to inspect my side sewer?

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To find an inspection company, search the Internet or local yellow pages for “drain cleaners” or “sewer contractors” and call to inquire about video inspection services.

### How much can I expect an inspection to cost?

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The cost of an inspection can vary depending on the length of the side sewer and how easy or difficult it is to access the side sewer. An average side sewer inspection costs \$200 to \$400. Costs may vary greatly from one company to the next. The Better Business Bureau is also a good resource for finding reputable companies: (206) 431-2222. Since companies offer a wide range of prices, it's a good idea to get at least three written bids before choosing a company.

### What should I expect from an inspection?

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An inspector will insert a video camera into the side sewer through a cleanout either outside or inside the building. If no cleanout is available, the inspector may need to install a cleanout or remove and replace a toilet to access wastewater plumbing. In some cases, plumbing vents on a roof can be used for video camera access. If you would like to receive a video recording of the inspection, either on VHS or DVD, ask about the inspector's equipment capability prior to selecting a company.

### How will I know if repairs should be made?

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The inspector should be able to point out defects to you on the video as they are performing the inspection and provide you with recommendations on whether repairs or replacements may be needed. Although many side sewer inspection companies may also offer repair services and may provide you a quote, it is also a good idea to get a few more written bids before choosing a repair company. If you're unsure about whether the repairs being recommended are necessary, you may also want to share the video inspection with another inspection company to receive a second opinion before agreeing to costly repairs.

To read about the City of Tacoma's recommendations regarding specific side sewer problems and repairs please refer to the Side Sewer Condition Assessment & Repair Manual. For a copy, go to [www.cityoftacoma.org/sidesewer](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/sidesewer) or call Environmental Services at (253) 591-5588.

#### Permit information Building & Land Use Services

(253) 591-5030  
[www.cityoftacoma.org/mytacoma](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/mytacoma)  
[www.govme.com](http://www.govme.com)

#### Resources and guidance Public Works Environmental Services

(253) 591-5588  
[www.cityoftacoma.org/sidesewer](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/sidesewer)



Public Works  
Environmental Services  
Wastewater Management

[www.cityoftacoma.org/sidesewer](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/sidesewer)  
(253) 591-5588