What is Project Dry Basement?

Our sanitary sewer system was built with pipes large enough to hold the sewage that comes from homes and businesses. During periods of heavy rain, rain water is getting into the system and overloading it. When the amount of water in the sanitary sewer is more than what the system can hold, sanitary sewers overflow into rivers and backup into basements.

Project Dry Basement is designed to prevent sanitary sewer backups in single and two-family homes in Columbus. If a home is eligible, the City of Columbus will provide installation of an approved backflow prevention device on your home sewer line, using the city’s certified plumbing contractor.

Who is eligible for the program?

If your sanitary sewer backs up, please report it to Sewer Maintenance at 614.645.7102, staffed 24 hours a day. City staff will investigate sewer conditions to determine what caused the backup. In order to accurately determine the cause, a backup must be reported within 24 hours. If city staff determines that the backup was due to excess rain in the sanitary sewers, a program application will be mailed to the homeowner.

What does it cost to participate in the program?

There is no direct cost to the homeowner for basic installation of a valve.

If the plumbing contractor determines that additional work is required in order to install the device, such as rerouting the service line, the contractor will itemize all additional charges and discuss these with the homeowner before any work begins so the homeowner can make an informed decision on whether to proceed.

Is the program available for rental properties?

Yes, the property owner can apply for the program. Rental properties are subject to a plumbing inspection to ensure the health and safety of residents. Contact Building and Zoning Services at plumbinginfo@columbus.gov or 614.645.6340 for more information and current fee schedule.
What can I expect during installation?
The homeowner must be present to allow access to the basement. The certified plumber who holds the contract with the city will:
• cut the floor to access service line
• clean out service line
• install backwater valve
• finish floor
• add the alarm to the device

How does a backflow prevention device work?
When water rises in the sewer a valve closes, preventing backflow into the basement drain. It is automatic and requires no electricity. The alarm will sound when the device is in operation to remind you to limit the amount of water you use. Please read and follow all manufacturers’ instructions.

Who is responsible for maintenance?
The device will become part of your home sewer line, which property owners are responsible for maintaining. Like any mechanical device, routine maintenance is necessary for reliable operation. The manufacturer’s operating instructions will be provided to you at the time of installation. Valves are under warranty and will be replaced if they fail within two years of installation.

Will the claims policy remain the same?
Yes, the claims process and policies remain the same.

Will this device help wet basements due to water seeping through walls and windows?
No, this device only prevents sanitary sewer backups through a basement drain.

Does Columbus have a plan to fix the problem of too much rain water in the sanitary sewer?
The city has developed a program called Blueprint Columbus that will address basement backups caused by problems in the city’s sanitary lines. You may learn more at Columbus.gov/blueprint.