

**The Los Alamos Dept of
Public Utilities (DPU)**
Gas, Water, Electric & Wastewater Services



February 8, 2011

Utility Customer
«ADDRESS»
«City_St_Zip»

Re: Notice to Property Owners Concerning the Risk of Sanitary Sewer Back-Ups.

Although the Los Alamos Dept. of Public Utilities has a rigorous maintenance program for cleaning and repairing sanitary sewer mains, obstructions can still occur for a variety of reasons. It is important that property owners ensure that their structures are protected from sewer backups as they can be expensive to remediate and have adverse public health implications. The Dept. of Public Utilities (DPU) wants to actively work with its customers to determine their risks associated with sewer backups and any mitigating measures that could be taken.

Since the early 1960's the national plumbing code has required that structures with plumbing fixtures located below the elevation of the next upstream sewer manhole be equipped with backwater valves to prevent sewer backups into structures. Backwater valves, when required by the plumbing code, are to be **installed, owned and maintained by the property owner**. A mapping study of Los Alamos and White Rock has identified 2,438 properties that appear to meet this condition. Your property located at «ADDRESS» is one of these properties.

This plumbing code provision has been established to prevent sewage from backing up into structures. When service lines are properly equipped with a backwater valve, sewer line obstructions should result in overflowing manholes rather than flows into structures. To reduce the incidence of property damage and public health risks from sewer backups, the DPU is encouraging its sanitary sewer customers to comply with applicable plumbing codes. DPU will work with customers to determine the applicability of this code provision and their potential risk. To schedule an appointment with a DPU technician, please call our office at 662-8333 or 311 during normal business hours.

Prevention of sewer backups is a shared responsibility. Failure to comply with applicable plumbing codes could result in increased liability exposure on the part of property owners. Please work with us to ensure that your property is protected.

Sincerely,

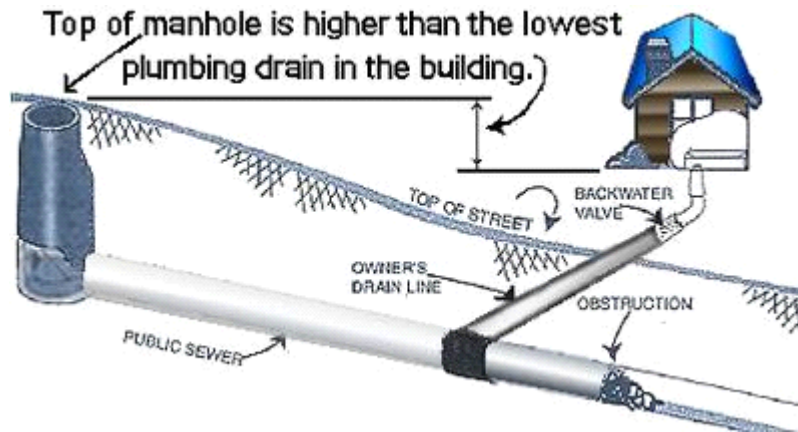
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John E. Arrowsmith".

John E. Arrowsmith
Utilities Manager

Attachments: Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Backwater Valves
Uniform Plumbing Code Section 710.1



Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Backwater Valves



Question #1: How do I determine if I have a backwater valve?

Answer: Back water valves are installed in the home plumbing usually in a crawl space or basement in an accessible area or they are installed in the yard buried in-line with the home's sewer service line with a vault or PVC riser to allow access.

Question #2: What is the cost to install a backwater valve?

Answer: An indoor installation in a basement may cost \$500 to \$700 depending on the existing conditions. An outdoor installation requiring excavation may cost \$1000 to \$1600 depending on site conditions.

Question #3: Who installs backwater valves?

Answer: A licensed plumber is qualified to install backwater valves.

Question #4: Does a backwater valve require maintenance?

Answer: A backwater valve requires periodic maintenance to perform correctly. Depending on the manufacturer's requirements the maintenance typically consists of removing and cleaning the check assembly. Failure to maintain could result in the check assembly not seating correctly allowing flow to leak back through the valve into the home.

Question #5: What is the likelihood that I may experience an overflow if I do not have a backwater valve?

Answer: The DPU estimates that less than 5 homes per year experience a backup into a home located below the upstream manhole due to not having a backwater valve.

Question #6: If my home has a low pressure sewerage pump station do I need a backwater valve?

Answer: Low pressure sewer systems are equipped with a check valve that prevents flow from entering the home plumbing therefore a separate backwater valve is not needed in this case.