



Sewage Backup and Overflow in Jamaica, Queens

What caused basements to flood in Jamaica, Queens?

On Saturday, November 30, a sewer main in Jamaica, Queens became blocked, causing sewage to flood the basements of some neighborhood homes. The Department of Environmental Protection is investigating the cause of the blockage.

How is the City responding to this incident?

- The City has hired contractors to clean homes affected by the sewer main blockage.
- Affected residents can file a [water damage claim form](#) at the NYC Comptroller's website, for reimbursement. Visit comptroller.nyc.gov and search for **eclaim filing**.
- A service center for impacted residents has been set up at the Courtyard Marriott at 145-11 N. Conduit Avenue. City workers and the Red Cross will help answer questions, provide guidance and support, and help residents fill out claim forms from the Comptroller.
- The City is working on repairing the sewage line and has also installed a bypass pump to help with flooding.
- The Red Cross and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development are helping residents who cannot stay in their homes find temporary housing.

Will this incident affect my health?

The main health concern is exposure to bacteria, viruses and parasites found in the untreated sewage. Direct contact with sewage can cause gastrointestinal illness, including nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhea. It can also cause skin infections and irritation. Children, older people and those with weakened immune systems can be at increased risk of illness. If you are experiencing any of these health concerns, please talk to your health care provider.

What health precautions should I take?

- Keep children and pets away from the affected area.
- Older people and those with weakened immune systems should avoid the area, if possible.

How should I clean up the flooded area?

The City is providing professional cleaning crews to assist homeowners. However, if you choose to do any of the work yourself, take these steps:

- Personal safety and protection
 - Wear protective clothing, including waterproof boots, rubber gloves, safety goggles and clothes that are either washable or disposable.
 - Consider using a dust mask when cleaning to avoid swallowing splashes from the sewage.

- When cleaning up the affected area, do not touch your nose, mouth, eyes or ears with your hands.
- Disinfection and removal of affected materials
 - Remove standing wastewater with a mop, wet vacuum or squeegee. Moisture-absorbing products can also be purchased in home improvement stores.
 - Discard anything that is porous and cannot be cleaned, for example, stuffed animals, upholstered furniture, mattresses, food items, paper and books. Large rugs and wall-to-wall carpeting may need to be discarded if cleaning is not good enough.
 - Discarded items should be sealed in heavy plastic bags.
 - Contaminated clothing and small rugs should be thoroughly washed in warm or hot water, with bleach if possible.
 - Clean hard surfaces with soapy water and disinfect by wiping them down with a bleach solution of one cup of bleach mixed with two gallons of water. Leave the solution on contaminated surfaces for at least one minute. Thoroughly rinse with water once finished. Avoid skin or eye contact when using bleach.
 - **Warning:** Never mix multiple disinfectants together. Mixing bleach with ammonia or detergents containing ammonia products can create dangerous gases.
 - When finished cleaning, discard gloves and clean boots and goggles with a bleach solution. Rinse with clean water and allow boots to dry.
 - Wash your hands and body with soapy water after cleanup.
- Ventilation and drying
 - To prevent mold growth, dry affected areas as quickly as possible. For more information on preventing mold growth, go to nyc.gov/health and search for **mold**.
 - Allow air flow and reduce humidity by opening doors and windows, if possible.
 - Fans and dehumidifiers can be used to circulate air and reduce moisture. Centralized air systems should only be used if the ducts were not impacted by wastewater.