



ORO LOMA SANITARY DISTRICT

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SUBJECT: BUBBLED TOILETS

Dear Oro Loma Customer,

Thank you for informing us that your toilet bubbled while our crews were working in proximity of your property. We apologize for the inconvenience and hope that this letter will answer some of your questions about bubbling toilets.

1. Is this a health risk?

The water that came out of your toilet is potable water from the toilet bowl. Unless your toilet was in use when this occurred, this water is no different than that encountered while cleaning your toilet.

2. What is Oro Loma doing in the street?

In order to insure reliable sewer service, the District inspects, cleans, and repairs its sewer system on a continuous basis. In fact, our staff cleans and televises nearly 400 miles of sewers per year.

3. How does sewer cleaning cause my toilet to bubble?

Typical industry cleaning equipment uses high-pressure water to clean sewers. The first step is to use the high-pressure water jets to propel the hose and cleaning nozzle upstream as far as 800 feet. During this process, air within the main pipe is displaced and sometimes goes up the private lateral pipe and releases through the toilet. This can also happen during the cleaning phase, when high-pressure water is pulled downstream to the cleaning truck.

4. What causes the air to come from my toilet?

Over the years, District crews have found that the bubbling of toilets have many causes, some of which are:

- Obstructed vent pipes;
- Vent pipes that are positioned too far from the toilet;
- Lateral pipes that may be in use as the crew is cleaning (e.g. draining washing machine, draining bathtub, etc.);
- Lateral pipes that may have obstructions that are causing them to hold water (e.g. roots, grease, etc.).

5. What does District staff do, once informed of a bubbling toilet?

Once notified of a bubbling toilet, the Collection crew leader explains to the customer what has happened, and checks to see if there is a clean-out in the customer's yard that could be opened in the future during cleaning. The crew leader then makes notes and completes paperwork that puts the address on the District's computerized notification list. In the future, crews will notice that this address was "bubbled" at one time, and, before commencing the cleaning, they will notify the occupant of the possibility of bubbling toilets. In the event the occupant is not present when the cleaning begins, the crews will attempt to open clean-outs and/or lower water pressure to avoid bubbling.

6. What can I do to prevent my toilet from bubbling?

Since the District only maintains the sewer main pipe in the street, it is the homeowner's responsibility to keep the sewer lateral pipe in good working condition. When a sewer begins to drain slowly, it may be a sign that it needs to be cleaned or repaired. Trees and shrubs may have root structures that are entering the lateral pipe. The homeowner needs to make sure to have a clean-out for accessing the line. The District also recommends the homeowner install a back-flow prevention device to prevent bubbling or sewer back-ups into the home.

It is always a good idea to keep the toilet lid down when not in use, and not install carpets in the bathroom unless they can be easily removed and cleaned. For more information, please visit our website at www.oroloma.org or call the District office at (510) 276-4700.

Sincerely,

Lenny Rather
Supervisor of Field Maintenance
Oro Loma Sanitary District