

Guaranteed Plumbing & Heating Urges Philadelphia Homeowners to Inspect the Sewer Component Most Have Never Heard Of

The curb trap sits under the sidewalk, belongs to the homeowner rather than the city, and is a common cause of backups. Now is the time to look at it.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, August 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Guaranteed Plumbing & Heating](#) is encouraging Philadelphia homeowners to have their sewer laterals camera inspected before fall, with particular attention to a component most residents do not know exists until it fails.

The curb trap is a J-shaped pipe that connects a home's main drain to the sewer lateral, typically buried beneath the sidewalk. The Philadelphia Water Department's own customer responsibility documentation defines it that way, and lists it squarely among the homeowner's obligations.

That responsibility is broader than most people assume. According to PWD, the homeowner must maintain household waste pipes and everything leading up to the sewer, including the main house drain, the curb trap, the sanitary and stormwater lateral, the slant, and the vent pipe. The city's responsibility covers water mains, stormwater inlets, and the sewer pipes that carry wastewater to treatment plants. Everything between the main and the house, including pipe running under the sidewalk or the roadway, belongs to the property owner.

Why the timing matters

The curb trap's shape is exactly what makes it vulnerable. A J-bend slows flow, and anything that slows flow collects what is moving through it. Roots find the joints, grease and debris catch on the roots, and the blockage builds until the lowest fixture in the house stops draining.

Late summer is when that risk peaks. Roots have had a full growing season to extend, and in a city with mature street trees over century-old clay laterals, they do not have far to go. Autumn then adds leaf debris and sustained rain, and in the parts of Philadelphia served by combined sewers, where stormwater and sewage share one pipe, a marginal lateral has to handle storm volume on top of household flow.

"Nobody calls us about a curb trap. They call us because the basement floor drain backed up," said a spokesperson for Guaranteed Plumbing & Heating. "Then we put a camera down and

there it is, under the pavement, packed solid. The tell is usually that several fixtures slow down at the same time. One slow sink is a sink problem. The whole first floor draining slowly is a lateral problem."

The company says other warning signs include gurgling from drains when another fixture is used, sewage odor near the vent pipe at the front of the house, and backups that appear at the lowest drain in the building first.

Help exists, and most homeowners do not know about it

Philadelphia offers assistance that many residents never hear about until they are already paying out of pocket.

Homeowners who receive a Notice of Defect from PWD for a broken or leaking water service line or sewer lateral may qualify for the Homeowner's Emergency Loan Program, a zero-interest loan repayable over five years, with longer terms possible for low-income customers. Applications go through PWD at (215) 685-4901. Qualifying households may also be able to have a broken water or sewer line repaired through the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation's Basic Systems Repair Program at (215) 448-2160. Separately, some homeowners qualify for free plumbing devices intended to prevent basement flooding during heavy rainstorms.

"Finding a failing lateral in August gives you options, including the city programs. Finding it in November when there is sewage on the floor means you are making decisions in an hour instead of a month."

Guaranteed Plumbing & Heating has operated from the same Northeast Philadelphia address since 1990. The family-owned, BBB-accredited company works under a licensed [Master Plumber](#), offers free estimates, confirms pricing before work begins, and answers its phone with a live person.

Homeowners can reach the company at 215-342-7200.

About Guaranteed Plumbing & Heating

Guaranteed Plumbing & Heating is a family-owned plumbing and HVAC contractor serving Philadelphia, Bucks County, and Montgomery County since 1990. Services include emergency plumbing and HVAC repair, curb trap repair and replacement, sewer line repair and replacement, drain cleaning, hydro jetting, camera line inspections, sump and sewage ejector pumps, water heaters, gas and water lines, excavation, boiler and furnace repair and replacement, air conditioning repair and replacement, bathroom remodeling, plumbing code violation corrections, and insurance claim documentation. The company is BBB-accredited and located at 900 Cottman Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19111.

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