

## FAQS

### Lateral Sewer Line Inspection

*Mt. Lebanon Commission is considering an ordinance that would require inspection and repair, if necessary, of lateral sanitary sewer lines before properties are transferred or home improvements requiring a plumbing permit get the go-ahead. The lateral line carries waste water from the house to the main sanitary sewer line in the street. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions:*

**What does the ordinance require?** Before a property is transferred or any project requiring a plumbing permit moves forward, the property owner will need to have a closed circuit television video inspection (CCTVI) of the lateral line and the wye that connects it to the municipal sewage system. If the inspection reveals improper hookups or defects in pipes, the owner will have to make repairs or replace the lateral before moving ahead with the sale or project. **Note:** *This does not apply to refinancing or property transferred as the result of divorce.*

**Why is this ordinance needed?** Cracked, collapsed or otherwise defective lateral lines allow surface storm water to infiltrate the sanitary system. Because the lateral lines are smaller than the sewer lines in the street, storm water infiltration can overload the laterals, causing backups in basements.

**What will be required of homeowners?** Before transferring a property or making improvements requiring a plumbing permit, the property owner will need to obtain certificate of compliance form to be completed and returned to the municipality. The ordinance requires that a National Association of Sewer Service Companies (NASSCO)-certified plumber who is registered and licensed in Allegheny County conduct a CCTVI inspection of the lateral line. If the line has no illegal connections or defects, the plumber will complete the form indicating so, and the municipality will issue a certificate of compliance. Any defects revealed by the CCTVI will have to be corrected before a certificate of compliance is issued.

**What will this cost property owner?** There is \$25 fee for the CCTVI form. Cost to perform the inspection will depend on the contractor selected and the severity of the defects that need to be corrected, if any are found.

**What sorts of defects will require repair?** The NAASCO defines five levels of defects based on what is observed and its severity. A Level 3 or higher defect will be considered a failure. Levels 3 to 5 include defects such as a visibly open crack, a break in the line or a collapsed line. A line with two or more Level 2 defects—typically single lengthwise cracks in the pipe that are not visibly open—also will be considered a failure.

**If I have a defect, will I have to dig up my yard and replace the whole line?** The ordinance will permit point repairs, so if a defect is confined to a small part of the line, the repair can be made there; the entire line will not need replacing. *(if you replace a driveway that covers your lateral line, consider replacing the line then—cheaper than ripping up your driveway later.)*

**How long will people have to make repairs?** There is no time limit. However, homeowners planning improvement projects or wishing to sell their homes may want to bring their lateral lines up to standard quickly, because once the CCTV identifies a defect, a certificate of compliance and a building permit will not be issued, nor will the property be able to be transferred until necessary repairs are made or adequate funds are escrowed to cover the repair costs. A certificate of compliance will be issued when a second video verifies the defect has been corrected.

**How long is certification good for?** Three years from the date on the certificate of compliance.

**Who will oversee this process and issue certificates of compliance?** Mt. Lebanon Inspection Office will oversee the process when a plumbing permit is required. Mt. Lebanon Public Works Department will oversee the process for the transfer of property.

**Do other municipalities have such ordinances?** Yes, Fox Chapel, Upper St. Clair and South Fayette have ordinances that are similar but not exactly the same.

**How many Mt. Lebanon properties will be affected?** Between 500 and 600 Mt. Lebanon properties are transferred each year. The number of home improvement projects requiring plumbing permits varies. The certification is valid for three years from the date on the certificate of compliance, so if a property is

sold or additional projects are done within that three-year time frame, an additional inspection will not be required.

**Who will be responsible for lateral testing and repairs in buildings with Homeowners Associations (HOAs)** The ordinance does not specify who will cover the cost of testing and repair at condominium or cooperative buildings with HOAs. Residents of these buildings share the lateral line, so one test will cover all the units for three years. HOAs within the municipality should determine how they wish to handle lateral testing and repairs for the buildings they serve. The municipality encourages HOAs to adopt policies regarding who is responsible for the cost of the certificate of compliance, inspections, and associated costs of lateral repair.

**What are the benefits of this ordinance?** Repairing the defects in our aging sewer system will result in fewer backups and less flooding. The ordinance is proactive, as many expect that the Environment Protection Agency is going to issue a consent decree requiring this sort of testing in the future.

**Can I obtain a certificate of compliance in advance, if I plan to move within three years?** Anyone hoping to sell a house and close quickly, would be wise to obtain a certificate of compliance before listing the property.

**Where can I find more information?** A public hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, November 13, 2018, at 8 p.m. in the commission chamber of the municipal building, 710 Washington Rd. View the [proposed ordinance](#).

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