

**Frequently asked Questions & Answers  
For the Hamilton County Water & Wastewater Treatment Authority's WWTA  
Private Service Lateral Program (PSLP)**

**1. Why a Private Service Lateral Program PSLP?**

The WWTA's sewage system is comprised of two parts; the **public portion** maintained by the WWTA, and the **private portion** maintained by the property owner.

Generally speaking, for every mile of public sewer line, there is an equal corresponding mile of private sewer lateral lines. The "Private" sewer lateral lines are owned by the home or business owner.

Private owners are responsible for installing and maintaining. The private owners are also responsible for repairing their own laterals; however, most do not even know they have a problem and may not know until the sewage backs up into their home or business.

**2. What is a Sewer Lateral?**

A **sewer lateral** is a pipe, normally 4" in diameter for residential (larger for commercial buildings), that runs underground from the foundation of a home or business and connects to the public sewer main. It is the **private sewer line** that transports sewage away from a private home or building, deposits it into the larger public sewer main.

**3. What is the Condition of my Sewer Lateral?**

Your service lateral is not one continuous pipe, it comes in sections, with each section being joined and connected to the next piece. The pipe may be made of a variety of materials (clay, brick, concrete, cast iron, VCP, PVC, and ABS composite) and is a bearing on the problem.

It is safe to assume that the vast majority of the private laterals in your community were installed when the home was built, and the majority of them are still the original lateral line pipe.

Community with clay pipe laterals with cement joints, or cast iron laterals installed decades ago will have more issues compared to newer cities or newer sections of your city with PVC or ductile iron laterals installed more recently. However, both the newer and older laterals can still break, shift, collapse or become infiltrated with roots.

**4. What is the PSLP?**

It is a three step approach to inspect, test, and repair sewer service lines from homes to the street. The repairs may include removal of blockage by roots or grease and realigning misaligned joints.

**5. What is I & I**

I & I (Inflow & Infiltration) is extraneous non-wastewater flow into the service lateral:

- “Infiltration” is water that might originate as ground water leakage or rainfall seepage and;
- “Inflow” sources are direct contributions of storm water or runoff through roof drains, sump pumps and other prohibited connections.

**6. Does the PSLP apply to all WWTA sewers customers?**

No, only those customers that are served by the gravity portion of the WWTA’s sewer collection system will fall under the PSLP line sewers. While Signal Mountain is the first municipality we’ll serve, the program will serve all of the WWTA's municipality members and the unincorporated Hamilton County.

**7. Why is this program so important to implement at this time?**

Before the WWTA issued the PSLP as part of their attempt to deal with the lateral I & I they researched and answered many questions:

- How serious is the problem in the WWTA System?
- Is there pressure from the City of Chattanooga Regional Treatment to address I & I because of infrastructure capacity concerns?
- What is the estimate that I & I are costing the WWTA yearly?
- How does the WWTA deal with the Commissioner’s Order that is driving the need for strong private sector program?
- What is the cost of the program?

**8. Is there a driving force behind the PSLP?**

Yes, the HCWWTA received an Order from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) to correct bypass issues on Signal Mountain. Until the problems are adequately addressed, the WWTA will not be allowed to connect new customers to the Signal Mountain collection system with the exception of those who had agreements in place prior to the moratorium.

The TDEC Order also required the WWTA to develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to establish a Maintenance, Operation, and Management (MOM) program for the entire collection system.

In accordance with the approved WWTA’s procedures and regulations, beginning May 1, 2009, the WWTA will begin implementation of the eight dollar (\$8.00) fee for the Private Service Lateral Program (PSLP) as a part of the requirements of the TDEC.

**9. What will I have to pay for this program?**

The first two steps of the program (inspection and testing) the estimated cost is \$250-\$300 per home, while the third step (repair) is anticipated to cost between \$3,000 - \$5,000 per home. The WWTA Board voted unanimously to implement a service fee of (\$8.00 per month) for the next 20 years to finance the program.

**10. Will this be a continuing or one time program?**

After the lines have been inspected, tested and repaired, homeowners will be required to have their lines inspected and tested every five years and will be responsible for those costs.

**11. Will the WWTA enter property without my knowledge to conduct testing?**

The WWTA wants to work with homeowners and will seek homeowner's permission before doing work on private property:

- A portion of the service lateral will be located on private property. A Consent and Agreement will be sent to all property owners and tenants.
- By signing the Consent and Agreement the WWTA will be authorized to have unobstructed accessibility to your property in order to install the required clean-outs, evaluate your service lateral, and perform any necessary rehabilitation construction to your service lateral.
- You are not surrendering ownership of the property and once the rehabilitation is complete, the responsibility for maintaining your service lateral will be yours once again.

**12. Will this work interfere with other work being done- -like road paving?**

Possibly, but the WWTA will work closely to coordinate their work with municipal governments and the County to ensure that this program will not interfere with paving plans.

**13. How Do You Fix A Broken Lateral Line?**

There is more than one method available to fix a defective sewer lateral. The traditional method is to dig a trench with a backhoe and unearth the buried pipe to repair or replace it, but there are a wide variety of "trenchless" repair alternatives.

**14. Who Makes The Repairs to the Lateral Lines?**

The WWTA will bid out the inspections and repairs.

**15. Will this really make a difference in the WWTA sewer service area?**

Absolutely!

PSLP will aid in addressing the capacity of the main line sewer system not affected by I&I and allow additional connections to the sewer system with out having to increase the main sewer line pipe size.

With the PSLP in place it will aid in the elimination of harmful pathogens in our creeks, streams and waterways. This will help to keep our environment clean and safe for the future.

**16. Is the WWTA alone in facing this issue?**

No, many utilities and municipally owned sewer systems are facing similar challenges and there are different approaches on how to implement and finance the program. The WWTA feels its plan is one that provides a reasonable approach by providing initial payment for service and repair so that homeowners won't have to.