



# THE ENDEAVOR

A PUBLICATION OF THE STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

VOLUME XIII, NUMBER 2

SERVING EL CERRITO, KENSINGTON, AND RICHMOND ANNEX

FALL 2005

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## MISSION STATEMENT OF THE STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT

It shall be the mission of the Stege Sanitary District to plan and operate a safe, efficient, and economical wastewater collection and transfer system for the present and future customers of the District.

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## District Acts to Reduce Sanitary Sewer Overflows

As of September 6, 2005, all homes in the Stege Sanitary District must have a Certificate of Compliance verifying that the home's lateral is in good condition before the home is sold. Other conditions under which a home's sewer lateral must be inspected and, if necessary, repaired or replaced, remain the same as before.

### What Is a Lateral?

A sewer lateral is the pipe that carries wastewater from your home to the sewer main. Generally, the sewer main is in the street, though it may be in the back or side yard. In Stege Sanitary District, the sewer lateral is owned by property owner, who is responsible for maintaining the entire lateral, including the connection to the District's main sewer.

### Why Is the Requirement Necessary?

The ordinance will help protect the local environment and inform both the existing and prospective property owner about the condition of laterals.

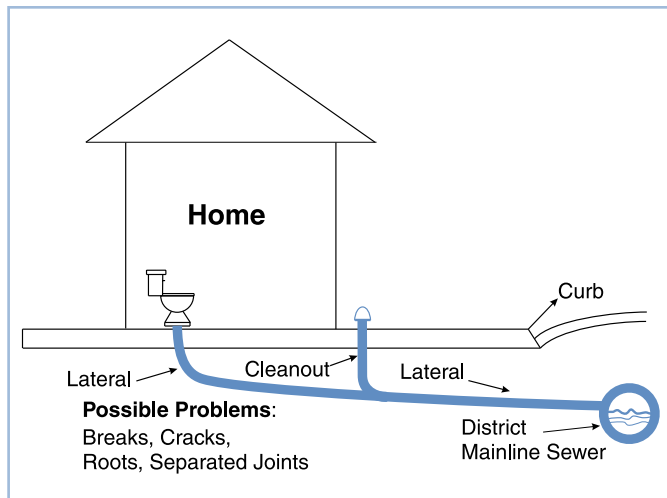
A faulty or broken lateral can cause sewage to back up into the house or overflow onto the ground or street and can ultimately end up in storm drains, creeks, and the Bay. Wastewater may also leak underground. In addition, during rain storms, a great deal of water reaches the District's



*A failing sewer lateral can cause sewage to overflow onto the ground.*

sewer mains through cracked and leaking laterals. This increased water flow can overload the East Bay Municipal Utility District's wastewater treatment facilities, the plants that process the District's wastewater.

Additionally, homeowners and prospective homeowners are often unaware there are problems in laterals since they are buried underground.



# Certificate of Compliance

A broken sewer lateral and sewage overflow is a problem no homeowner needs or wants. Having the lateral pipe repaired or replaced before an emergency provides the homeowner peace of mind. It also gives the owner the opportunity to obtain a Certificate of Compliance from the District.

As of September 6, 2005, all homes being sold in the District must have a Certificate of Compliance before close of escrow. It makes sense, therefore, for the homeowner to obtain the certificate well in advance of selling his/her property.

The certificate is issued by the District after review and approval of a video tape showing that the lateral is in good condition or after the complete replacement of the sewer lateral. It is good for ten years. There is no fee for the review or for the certificate. Homeowners who have previously replaced a lateral and have a permit on file with the District may ask for a Certificate of Compliance effective for ten years from the date of permit approval.

The cost of inspection and possible repair or replacement of the sewer lateral *can be negotiated between buyer and seller*, the same way that inspection and repair of a roof or foundation might be. In this way, the new owner is assured of a properly functioning lateral that protects the owner, the community, and the environment.

STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT  
Thursday, October 13, 2005

SEWER LATERAL  
CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

OWNER: HOMEOWNER  
ADDRESS: 7500 S. HIGHWAY 125,  
EL CERRITO

The Stege Sanitary District has reviewed the sanitary sewer lateral condition of the above referenced property based upon the following submitted information:

Takeaway of the Sewer Lateral  
 Final Inspection/Signoff of Sewer Repair/Replacement - Permit

This Certificate is to certify that the subject sewer lateral complies with the District Ordinance Code and Standard Specifications.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/1/2005  
EXPIRATION DATE: 10/1/2015

If you have any questions, or if we can provide any other assistance, please call us at (510) 524-4668.

Thank you,  
STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT

Res. Incho,  
Associate Civil Engineer

STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT - 10000 STEGE DRIVE - EL CERRITO, CA 94530-2449

## Easy Steps to Comply with the Lateral Ordinance

- 1. Videotape your lateral.** This step generally costs between \$50 and \$150. If there is no cleanout device on the lateral, the cost for video taping may be higher. A list of licensed contractors in the area is available on our Web site ([www.stegesd.dst.ca.us/lateral.htm](http://www.stegesd.dst.ca.us/lateral.htm)) or from our office; see contact information on the back page.
- 2. Bring the videotape to our office for review.** There is no cost for our review, and it is quick. In less than 48 hours, our staff will provide a Certificate of Compliance or inform you if your lateral needs to be repaired or replaced.
- 3. Make repairs if needed and obtain your Certificate of Compliance.** If your lateral is already in good condition, we will provide a Certificate on the spot. If repair is needed, a permit issued by the District is required before work can be performed on the lateral. Cost for this permit is \$25. There may be an encroachment fee levied by local community authorities. Actual repair or replacement costs are set by contractors.

These documents can help you comply with the lateral policy—[www.stegesd.dst.ca.us/lateral.htm](http://www.stegesd.dst.ca.us/lateral.htm)

- [Sewer Lateral Compliance Plan - Questions and Answers for Property Owners, Contractors, and Realtors](#) (PDF file, 80k)
- [Sewer Lateral Compliance Plan - A Step-by-Step Guide to the Process](#) (PDF file, 82k)
- [Sewer Lateral Compliance Plan - Standards & Procedures](#) (PDF file, 101k)
- [Stege Sanitary District Boundary Map](#) (PDF file, 705k)
- [Current List of Registered Plumbing Contractors](#) (PDF file, ~90k)
- [Ordinance 1863-0605](#) (PDF file, 22k)

*Relating to the Testing and Possible Repair or Replacement of Existing Laterals, Upon Sale of Property*

- [Ordinance 1863-0605](#) (PDF file, 31k)

*Amending Section 4.6 of the Stege Sanitary District Ordinance Code in Order to Clarify the Rights and Responsibilities of Property Owners*

- [District Ordinance Code - Chapter 4](#) (PDF file, 50k)

*Regulations Governing the Construction and Testing of Wastewater Facilities*

- [Current List of Registered Plumbing Contractors](#) (PDF file, ~90k)

## SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE

### Julie McDonald — Administrative Assistant



If you call the District with questions, including ones about the new ordinance, you may get to speak to Julie McDonald.

Julie's official title is Administrative Assistant, but that's just a convenient catch-all label for someone whose job includes, in addition to answering customer questions, working in payroll and accounts receivables, and issuing permits.

Julie is a long-time East Bay resident and graduate of Richmond High School. Before coming to Stege in February 2005, she worked as an accounting technician with the City of Albany for ten years. Those who have lived in the area for some time probably know of Kin's Restaurant, the popular San Pablo eatery. The restaurant was owned by Julie's parents.

The variety of what she does, and most of all, the working environment, are what Julie likes about working for the District. She lives in El Sobrante with her husband and two young sons.

## Financial Help Is Available

Financial aid programs are available to homeowners in the District who need to repair or replace their home's sewer lateral.

- **The Neighborhood Preservation Program**, operated by the Contra Costa County Building Inspection Department, provides loans to low- and moderate-income persons to improve and enhance the livability of their homes by correcting health and safety problems. Contact them at (925) 335-1137 for information on obtaining a loan for sewer lateral work.
- **The City of Richmond** has loans available for home improvement, including repair or replacement of a sewer lateral. Contact Evelyn Craig at (510) 307-8140 for more information.

## How You Can Help Protect Your Property, Your Community, and the Environment

### Protect Your Sewer Lateral

The lateral pipe leading from your home that connects to the District's sewer main is the responsibility of the property owner. This line should never be broken or cut to connect a rain gutter or a drain. Tree roots, rodents, and contaminants can enter through a break, creating maintenance, health, and environmental problems.

### Report Overflows—Call with Questions

Call the District at (510) 524-4667 if you notice sewage overflows or experience a backup within your home.

### Prevent Backflows

A backflow prevention system prevents wastewater from back-



flowing up through drains and toilets into your house in the event of a blockage or failure of your lateral.

A wastewater backup might also occur if your lateral is not far enough above the rim of the nearest upstream sewer manhole and there is an extraordinarily high volume of water in the main, or if there is a blockage downstream that forces sewage back upstream. The system consists of a valve that allows wastewater to flow out of the device and outside your house, rather than inside your house.

If you are unsure if you have a backflow prevention system on your lateral, or if you want to know if you need one, contact Stege at (510) 524-4668, Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. to make an appointment for a free inspection of your system.



**STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT**  
 7500 Schmidt Lane  
 El Cerrito, CA 94530-0537 (510) 524-4667

**PRSRT STD**  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Oakland, CA  
 Permit Number 3729

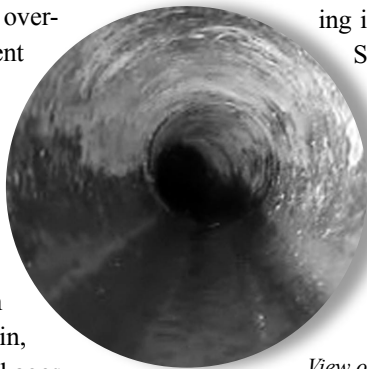
## Sewer Lateral Testing and Repair Provides Benefits

**B**ecause sewer laterals are underground, it is easy to forget them. But as they age, they can cause many serious and costly problems. During storms, cracks in laterals allow rainfall to enter, which can overload the wastewater treatment plants. In fact, up to two-thirds of surplus sewer water is from laterals.

Over time, roots can grow into a lateral. When these roots are cut out of the pipe, they are often washed into the District main, where they can cause blockages that result in sewage overflows into streets, creeks, and storm drains that flow directly into San Francisco Bay. Overflows such as these are violations of the Clean Water Act and Stege is subject to significant fines and possible lawsuits related to these overflows.

After studying the issue for years, the Stege Board of Directors selected a testing and repair program based on similar programs in the cities of Albany, Alameda, and Burlingame. The requirement for testing and, if necessary, repair or replace-

ment of the time of sale was selected. The rationale is that the cost of a lateral replacement is less of a burden if done at the time of a property sale because money is being exchanged and financing is readily available. The Stege Board made one modification to the lateral ordinance earlier this fall; Hardship and probate sale provisions were added after input from the real estate community.



*View of the inside of a sewer lateral that is in good condition.*

As soils settle and shift, sewer laterals can break. Sometimes, property owners crack open their laterals to insert outdoor drains. These cracks and breaks allow rainfall to infiltrate and overflow the treatment plants. Also, roots can enter through cracks and breaks on the lateral. Eventually large balls of roots build up and clog laterals, or come loose and clog main sewer pipelines.

*View of the inside of a sewer lateral clogged with roots that are growing through cracks in the lateral.*



### How to Contact Stege

**By phone:**  
 (510) 524-4667

**By mail:**  
 Stege Sanitary District  
 7500 Schmidt Lane  
 El Cerrito, CA 94530-0537

**By email:**  
[staff@stegesd.dst.ca.us](mailto:staff@stegesd.dst.ca.us)



The District is developing plans to evaluate the program on a regular basis to identify ways to make the program as effective, fair, and easy as possible for our customers.