

## New regulations for clogged sewers

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A new provincial law may prove to be an inconvenience, but could also save lives.

City officials are advising residents that clogged sewer lines are going to take a little longer to clear out. Like everyone else, city workers are now required to call a 1-800- number and fill out a form, before they can clear a clogged sewer line.

George Elliott, public works and transportation commissioner for the city, explained that Union Gas staff now have to locate underground gas lines before they can dig up pipes or bore out the sewer lines to clear them.

Elliott explains that in recent years, Union Gas and other gas companies have used trenchless technology to install new gas line services to many homes and businesses. In some cases, the gas companies have augured right through existing sewer lines. Unless the gas line is located prior to clearing blocked sewer lines, city workers could potentially cut through the gas line causing a leak and potential explosion.

"If we attempt to clear out the sewer line and the gas line is nicked, gas could leak back into the house and cause an explosion," Elliott said. "It's happened in several places in the U.S. and Ontario. We've even had a few leaks here, but nothing has happened."

Elliott apologized for the delays to residents wanting to get a blockaded sewer line cleared, "but this is beyond our control and we ask people to understand."

He said clearing a sewer line usually takes about 45 minutes to complete. However, new regulations could increase that time to more than two hours in order to have the gas line located.

"It will all depend on where the locator is coming from. If they are in town, it might not take too long. But if they have to come from someplace else, it could take quite a bit longer," he said.

As with any new system, Elliott said it's going to take the city and gas companies time to work out the bugs and streamline the process.

"We'll continue to work on it," he said.

The new law requires municipalities, plumbers, sewer contractors and the general public to call Ontario One Call at 1-800-400-2255 before any work is performed to unblock a sewer. It means a sewer safety inspection form must be completed prior to the start of work.

For general information, visit the City of Cambridge website at [www.cambridge.ca](http://www.cambridge.ca) or direct questions to Union Gas online at [www.uniongas.com/contactus](http://www.uniongas.com/contactus). To report a natural gas emergency, call 1-877-969-0999.

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