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Chicago Department of Water Management Changes Private Drain Program Inspection Procedures

In response to a call from one of our PCA Midwest member contractors, our Association contacted the Chicago Department of Water Management to discover that it has recently enacted a new policy change in the city's Private Drain Program.

In the past, our affiliated contractors would rod and video a homeowner's private drain line when called upon to determine if a break was on the private (homeowner) property or in the public (city) way. After that initial visit, our affiliated contractors would schedule a city inspector to come out and verify the results. Now, according to the Chicago Department of Water Management, that city inspector must be scheduled to be present at the first visit by our affiliated contractors, eliminating the need for a second visit.

Here is the new "Private Drain Program" procedure from an email received at the PCA Midwest office on October 31, 2018 from the Chicago Department of Water Management:

1. Homeowner calls 311 and registers for the Private Drain Program.
2. A Department of Water Management crew is scheduled to investigate.
3. The crew determines whether the problem is in the main sewer or in the private drain.
4. If the problem is in the private drain, the homeowner must hire a licensed sewer contractor to rod and televise the private drain with a Department of Water Management House Drain Inspector present. The contractor should call the Department of Water Management at 312.744.5503 to schedule an inspector.
5. If the line can be opened by rodding, no further Department of Water Management action will be taken.
6. If the line cannot be opened by rodding, then the sewer contractor and the Department of Water Management inspector determines if the break is on private property or in the public way.
7. If the break is on private property, the homeowner must hire and pay a City licensed sewer contractor to repair the private drain line.
8. If the break is in the public way, the Department of Water Management will determine if all program guidelines are met and schedule and pay to repair the line.

*This particular issue pertains only to our PCA/Plumbing Council affiliated contractors who perform residential service and participate in the Chicago "Private Drain Program." If you have any additional questions or concerns on any other business matter, please do not hesitate to contact us at 312-563-9526. **We're always here to serve you.***