

Maintenance holes

Maintenance holes provide access for general maintenance and repairs in wastewater systems.

What is a maintenance hole?

A maintenance hole is an access point into the underground wastewater network. We use them to access, inspect and maintain the network. This helps to protect private properties by reducing the risk of blockages and ensuring the wastewater system operates safely and effectively.

Most of our maintenance holes look like a round metal or concrete cover, level with the ground, as shown in the below picture. These covers lead to a larger access chamber below the ground. This allows our crews to access the network and have the working space they need while reducing the visual impact of the structure.



A typical maintenance hole on a private property.

Why are maintenance holes needed?

Maintenance holes allow us to inspect and maintain the wastewater network.

In an emergency, when pipes become blocked or damaged, crews need to access the network to reduce and stop wastewater overflow and protect you and the environment.

Most of our inspections and repairs to the wastewater network are done through maintenance holes but we may still need to dig to repair broken or collapsed pipes, if required.

Where are maintenance holes installed?

We need to install maintenance holes at regular points along the wastewater network. We try to put them in easily accessible locations at about 180 metre intervals or where a wastewater pipeline changes direction.

Maintenance holes are found throughout our wastewater system in roads, private property and public reserves.

How will construction impact your property?

We normally install the pipeline first and then return later to build structures like maintenance holes and vent shafts. If there is a vent shaft attached to the maintenance hole, it will normally be built at the same time.

Because maintenance holes usually have a larger access chamber underground, we need to dig a large pit (normally two metres by two metres) to build them. It normally takes about two weeks to build the maintenance hole, depending on weather and ground conditions.

When the maintenance hole is installed and tested, we will restore the area to as close as possible to its previous condition. Normally this involves:

- levelling out the ground
- replacing any topsoil that was removed during construction
- grass seeding the area
- revisiting the site over future months to ensure the restoration is adequate.

We will document the above process with directly impacted landowners in a personalised pre-construction customer agreement.

What about compensation?

We compensate landowners when we build a maintenance hole on private property.

Compensation is a one-off payment of \$1,250 per maintenance hole, and payable once the structure and associated pipeline is built.

What happens after the maintenance hole is installed?

We are responsible for maintaining and inspecting the wastewater system. This means we need to be able to access all maintenance holes, even those located on private property.

If you have a maintenance hole on your property, you are responsible for ensuring we can locate and access it for emergency and general work. This means you must not bury, build over or obstructed the maintenance hole in any way.

We only need to access maintenance holes in an emergency or to maintain the network. If we are planning work in the area, we'll let you know before we access your property (likely to be less than once a year).

The type of work we might need to do includes:

- locating and opening maintenance holes
- inspecting maintenance holes and wastewater pipes using closed circuit television (CCTV)
- clearing tree roots
- cleaning pipes using high pressure water (jetting)
- repair/replacement of the maintenance hole

- other repairs/replacement of pipes.

In some cases, we may need to raise maintenance holes so that they are above flood levels. If this is necessary we will talk to landowners first about what that would involve.

Under normal conditions, maintenance holes will not overflow, however if our infrastructure gets damaged, stormwater may be able enter the wastewater network which could cause overflows in neighbouring properties.

Contact us

Please immediately report any damage to Sydney Water on 13 20 90 (24 hours).

To know more:

- visit our website at sydneywater.com.au
- call us on 13 20 92.