Service line protection plans offered by area companies

Homeowners are responsible for the maintenance and repair of their service lines – the portion of the pipe that extends from the home into the city’s main line, as well as any street or sidewalk repairs that are needed after work is completed.

Companies have recently mailed Aurora residents advertisements for service line protection plans. The plans assess a monthly fee, and, in exchange, help cover a portion of the costs if a homeowner’s service line breaks or need serious repairs. The plans typically cover water and sewer lines. Before committing to an agreement, homeowners should determine how old their service line is and what material it is made of – clay, PVC, etc. Generally speaking, homes built after 1985 have PVC sewer service lines - those tend to be much more durable. Homes built before 1985 can be made of clay, which can, over time, degrade. Water service lines are generally made copper. While it can happen, water service lines are much less likely to collapse or break.

The best way to determine what your service line is made of and its general condition is to have it videotaped by a plumber, which generally costs about $100. Water service lines cannot be videotaped.

As with any investment, homeowners are encouraged to research the business offering the service and the specific coverage provided by the protection plan.

In the meantime, there are many things homeowners can do to preventing service line backups:

- One of the most common causes for sewer line backups is roots that grow into the line. Trees won’t bother an intact line, but any crack or separation will attract roots to the moisture. You can minimize that intrusion by having you sewer service line cleaned annually.
- Do not put grease, dairy products or food scraps down the drain. Your garbage disposal doesn’t break it down enough. Instead, scrape food and grease off and put it in the trash.
- Do not flush hair, cigarette butts, aquarium gravel, kitty litter, or cotton swabs down the toilet. The sewer lines are not designed to handle those things.
- Do not flush baby wipes, flushable wipes or any paper product other than toilet paper. Those items do not break down quickly and can contribute to clogs.