

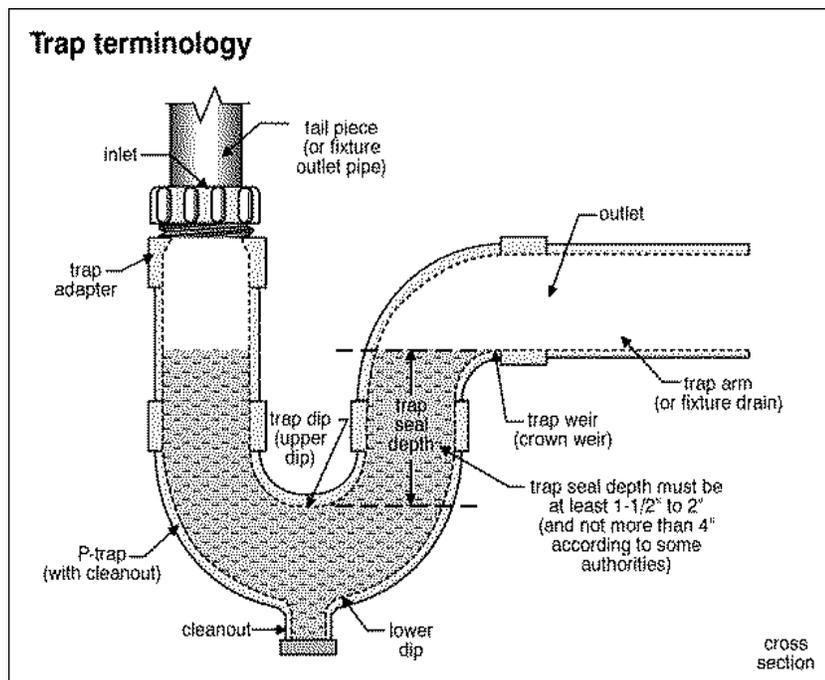
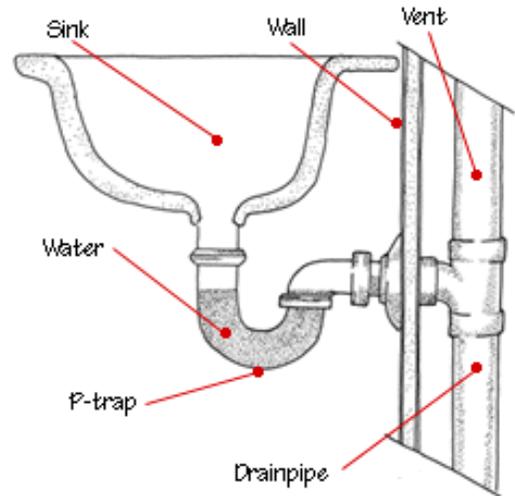


City of Phoenix

WATER SERVICES DEPARTMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

GUIDANCE SUPPLEMENT 9: SEWER ODORS IN A BUILDING OR HOUSE

First, check the water traps for water. They are the P shaped traps in the drain lines beneath sinks, tubs, and showers. The standing water in the P-trap serves as a barrier against sewer gas and pests entering your home through the sink drain. Water in the P-trap may have evaporated due to infrequent use, or if the house is vacant. To fix this problem, pour a quart of water into each problematic drain; this amount of water is enough to fill the P-trap and provide a full water seal.



Sewer odor is more prevalent at night or early in the morning. More people use their bathrooms between 6:30 and 8:00 a.m. and between 5:30 and 9:00 p.m. During these peak times, sewage flows heavily down the sewer pipes, pushing the gases out in front. These gases seek the path of least resistance, such as a dry drainpipe with a branch that has a dry P-trap and up come the offensive odors to fill the room.

Another source of odor is a build up of hair, dirt, and grime in your drains that can collect into a layer of slime that gives off an odor of rotten egg sulfur smell. If you are experiencing this problem, consult your plumbing professional on an appropriate drain cleaner for your home or visit some of the many do-it-yourself web sites on the internet.

Customers sometimes think the smell is coming from the water. An easy way to test to see if the odor is coming from the water is to fill a glass with water from the cold tap. Take the glass to another room and smell it. If there is no odor inside the glass, then you are experiencing a problem with your drains.

Another way sewer gas can enter the house is via vent pipe leaks. All wastewater plumbing is vented; vent pipes usually run behind the drywall up and out the roof of the house. If any of the joints do not have a good seal or the pipe itself is cracked, sewer gas will leak out and cause odor. A plumber can perform a smoke test to determine the location vent pipe leaks. Also be aware that vent pipes positioned too close to air intakes for evaporate coolers or central air units on the roof can also draw sewer gases back into the house.

Action on everyone's part facilitates optimal performance of the Publicly Owned Treatment Works. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Our staff is dedicated to assisting and providing guidance for you to meet environmental compliance goals. Should you have any questions regarding this guidance supplement or any other issues, please call the City of Phoenix Environmental Services Division at (602) 262-1859, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.