PLUMBER PROS — GUIDE

Sewer repair and camera inspection: ask for evidence

Get a usable record of the defect and a clear repair scope before approving sewer work.

Updated November 10, 2026

A sewer quote should explain the problem and show where it is. Ask the contractor what evidence supports the proposed repair. A blockage, a broken pipe and a shared sewer question need different next steps.

Request the inspection record

Ask for a copy of the video, the access point, the direction of travel and a written summary. Ask the contractor to identify what can be seen and what cannot. If the view is blocked, ask whether more work is needed before a repair method can be selected. Do not treat an incomplete recording as proof that the rest of the line is sound.

Portland's Broken Sewer and Drain Lines guide, checked 2026-11-10, says an owner who disputes a break or leak can have a contractor record the line and send the recording to Environmental Services for review. The city asks owners to check its video quality requirements first. This is a Portland procedure. Ask your own authority what evidence it accepts.

Locate the proposed work

Ask for a marked plan showing the defect, property boundary and proposed excavation or access areas. Ask whether the work reaches a sidewalk, street or shared line. Do not infer ownership from where a pipe appears on a sketch.

Portland separates permits for repairs between the house and property line from work in the right of way. Its guide also discusses shared sewers and easements. Confirm responsibility and the permit route with the local authority before approving a shared-line repair. The Portland source does not establish the rule in other cities.

Compare methods with the same scope

Ask each bidder to explain why the proposed method fits the observed defect. Request the length and location of work, access needs, connection details, cleanout plan and restoration scope. Ask what happens if the contractor finds a condition the inspection did not show.

Keep a closeout record

Ask who schedules inspection and when the work can be covered. Keep the permit record, approved changes, final invoice and any final video the contract calls for. Ask for written care instructions and warranty terms.

Before an urgent decision

If sewage is entering the building, tell the contractor and ask for immediate instructions on limiting use and access. Keep people away from contaminated areas. Do not enter a sewer or excavated trench to check the contractor's work yourself.

Sources

Checked 2026-11-10. These pages can change.

- City of Portland: Broken Sewer and Drain Lines, guide to repairs, permits and inspections, accessed 2026-11-10.

Frequently asked questions

Does a camera recording set the repair price?

No. Ask for a written repair scope that explains the defect, access, permit arrangements and restoration.