

Grinder Pump – Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is a grinder pump?**
A grinder pump is a pumping unit consisting of a pump and small pipe from the unit to the sewer system. Installed outside of your home, grinder pumps are used to discharge wastewater from your home to the sewer system.
- **When is a grinder pump installed instead of a traditional sewer lateral?**
A grinder pump is needed when conventional gravity sewers and/or laterals cannot be used to service an area or property, often due to topography of the area. Typically, they are needed when a home is lower than the street and/or further away from the sewers. They are also required when a low-pressure sewer system is constructed instead of a gravity sewer system.
- **Why does my property need a grinder pump when other properties near me can be served by gravity sewers?**
Your home may either sit lower than your neighbor's or further away from the gravity sewer and could not be served by a gravity sewer lateral. Your home may be serviced by a low-pressure sewer system while others in the community are serviced by a gravity sewer system.
- **Who is responsible for the grinder pump?**
Grinder pumps are installed on private property and therefore are the responsibility of the property owner. For a grinder pump system, Community Utilities of Pennsylvania's responsibility ends at the first curb stop on the sewer lateral. For a gravity sewer system, Community Utilities of Pennsylvania's responsibility ends at the property line.
- **What can I do to protect my grinder pump?**
A properly maintained grinder pump should be able to handle wastewater from the kitchen, bathroom, laundry, etc. However, some chemicals and substances can adversely impact a grinder pump and may cause safety hazards. Only flush the 3 P's (pee, poo, and toilet paper). Solids or liquids disposed down your drain can cause damage to the grinder pump and its controls, cause blockages and backups, and create unsafe conditions in your lines and tanks. Never pour the following items down drains or flush down toilets:
 - Grease
 - Explosive or flammable material
 - Kitty Litter
 - Aquarium gravel
 - Strong chemicals or toxic, caustic, or poisonous substances
 - Degreasing solvents
 - Diapers, feminine products, or cloth of any kind
 - Fuel or lubricating oil, paint thinner, or antifreeze
 - Plastic objects
 - Seafood shells
- **Does a grinder pump need regular maintenance or need to be pumped out?**

Grinder pumps do not need to be pumped out because they pump out the wastewater once the contents reach a certain level. Grinder pumps average eight years between maintenance calls and last six to sixteen years under normal conditions. Grinder pumps need to be run at least once every 3 months to continue functioning properly. Please follow the grinder pump manufacturer's recommended maintenance guidelines.

● **How do I know my grinder pump requires maintenance?**

If your grinder pump needs maintenance, an audible lighted alarm on your control panel will alert you that service is needed. If the alarm does not turn off within 5 minutes of discontinued water use, contact a contractor to inspect and make any necessary repairs.

● **What happens during a power failure?**

Your grinder pump is powered by electricity. If the power goes out, the grinder pump will not work unless it is powered by a generator. If water is used, the grinder pump holding tank has limited storage capacity. Because the length of the power outage cannot be planned, you should conserve water to the best of your ability to prevent the holding tank from overflowing.

● **What should I do with my pump when I go on vacation?**

If you plan on being away for several days, replace the wastewater in the tank with clean water to help minimize odors. To do this:

- Run an inside faucet for about 10 minutes – long enough for the grinder pump to start pumping (you may need to go outside near the pump and listen to verify it has started)
- After the pump starts, turn the inside faucet off
- The pump will run until the tank is empty and shut off automatically
- This process will cleanse the pump and keep it filled with a minimum amount of clean water. Remember to always leave the power to the pump on.

