



GR sewer warranty program explained

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Published: Wednesday, August 15, 2012 7:00 PM MDT

Enrollments for a sewer-line warranty plan offered through Utility Service Partners and the National League of Cities have reached nearly 1,000 homes in Green River.

The warranty offer began May 1 with 2,562 mailings sent to homeowners across the city. So far, 989 have chose to participate in the program.

Jeff Olson, a representative from Utility Service Partners, called the number of enrollments “remarkable” during a workshop hosted by the Green River City Council last night.

The Council hosted a discussion regarding the program to answer questions and hear an update on the program.

Olson said the success of the warranty program was due to proactive public relations efforts by the city as well as use of what he referred to as their champion letter along with a banner display on the city’s Web site.

Olson said the program’s enrollment percentage, 38.6 percent, is one of the highest the company has seen.

The Council also asked questions regarding the policy itself, including what Utility Service Providers considered to be a pre-existing condition.

Olson said something as serious as a collapsed line or backup in the line would qualify as a pre-existing condition if the warranty was purchased after those problems materialized. A tree root would not count.

“A tree root in there does not disqualify you as a pre-existing condition,” Olson said.

Whether or not a problem is considered to be an issue occurring before the warranty was purchased is up to the contractor USP sends to a potential claim. Olson said the company uses local contractors to deal with sewer issues covered within its warranty.

Olson said coverage begins immediately after the policy is activated, which caused some confusion among Council members as promotional materials and brochures they had referenced a 30-day waiting period before coverage starts.

Olson re-assured the Council that USP did not have a 30-day waiting period as they were led to believe.

Councilwoman Lisa Maes asked if planned unit development-style neighborhoods could receive coverage.

Olson replied by saying coverage could be extended if the individual sewer lines in the development linked to a city-owned sewer main. Residential sewer lines tying into a larger private line which flows into a city sewer main cannot be covered.

The coverage was brought about within Green River as a way to help residents protect themselves financially if a sewer problem occurred. According to city ordinances, the property owner is responsible for the sewer main leading from home to the main, regardless of where the property line is in relation to the main.

This differs in relation to how water main responsibility is determined. For a water line, the home owner is only responsible for the line located within the property. Beyond property line, the city is responsible for the pipe leading to the city's water mains.

The difference is due to the city not having control over what flows from a residential sewer line into the sewer main.

Olson said USP plans to offer its water line warranty coverage to residents this fall.