

What is an overflow relief gully and why is it important?

We tend not to think about the impact a sewer blockage might have on our home. In fact, the sewer system is subject to occasional blockages, resulting from invading tree roots and/or waste that has been inappropriately disposed of down the kitchen sink or toilet. An overflow relief gully (ORG) is a drain-like fitting located outside the home, designed to release any sewage overflow away from the interior of your home and outside to the garden, in the event of a sewer blockage – well clear of your home and valued possessions.

How does it work?

If installed correctly, an ORG works because it is fitted at a depth that is lower than any other waste outlet in the home, particularly the shower base and/or toilet (where an internal sewer spill is most likely to occur). If a sewer blockage occurs, the ORG fitting should pop off to release the pressure and direct sewage away from your home. As it is located outside, the interior of your home is more likely to be protected from a sewer spill.

What does it look like?

The shape and size of ORG's can vary greatly. Generally speaking, ORG's are between 100 and 150mm in diameter and are either made of plastic or metal alloy. In some properties there are fittings that may look like an ORG that are called 'disconnector gullies or vents'. These can easily be converted to an ORG, provided it is lower than any other waste outlets in the home.

Why aren't all homes fitted with an ORG and why are there so many different models?

Most properties constructed after 1976 have an ORG, surrounded in concrete, near an external wall (or in special cases they may have a reflux valve). Buildings connected to the sewer prior to this date do not have an ORG unless additional work has been carried out since 1976. We strongly recommend that home-owners in this situation install an ORG retrospectively. There have been many styles of ORG installed over the years, all of which met performance standards at the time of installation. However, in order to increase the measure of protection against a sewer spill inside your home, a current model should be installed. The best ORG is one that is unhindered, which pops off completely in an emergency.

An ORG checklist

It is the householder's responsibility to make sure their home is fitted with a properly designed and operational ORG. The following checklist should be used:

Make sure your ORG is NOT:

1. Covered by landscaping and/or garden beds
2. Covered by any object, such as a pot plant
3. Unable to pop off because it is corroded, filled with silt or concreted in

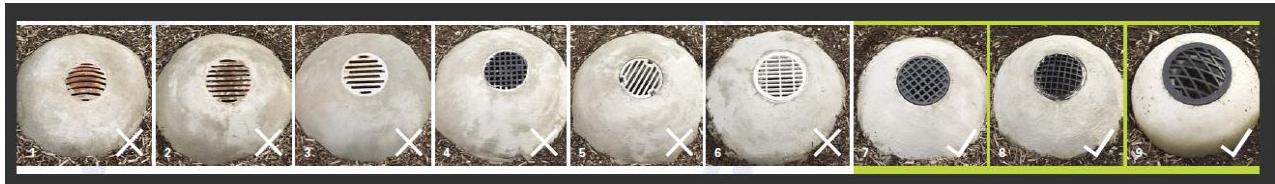
4. A model which needs to be manually twisted in order to pop out. It is also important that you consider the drainage path of the ORG. Any spill from an ORG should be able to drain away quickly without causing damage and not build up around the ORG itself. Make sure your ORG is NOT:
5. Poorly designed - some of the newer UPVC fittings are designed to raise only a small amount – not necessarily sufficient in the event of a sewer blockage. Unless the ORG can pop off completely, it will ultimately become blocked.
6. Set at the wrong level - the ORG should be installed so that it sits at least 150mm lower than the lowest fitting in the house (e.g. basin, shower, toilet, etc) and 75mm above the surrounding ground. This will ensure that stormwater does not flow directly into the ORG.

Are ORG's covered by regulations?

There are plumbing regulations that apply to the installation of ORG's (National Plumbing Code AS 3500 1998).

Who do I contact to install an ORG?

If your ORG does not meet the above criteria, then a licensed plumber should make an assessment. You can select a plumber of your choice or, alternatively, South East Water can provide you with a licensed plumber at your own cost. In some cases the ORG will need to be replaced. In others, the ORG may simply require some minor alteration to the actual fitting. In each instance, the cost associated with the installation or correction of an ORG is a measure of protection against your home.



1-4 It may be possible to convert older style disconnector gullies/vents that look like this into an ORG.

5-6 The top of an older style ORG only partially pops off.

7-9 Ideal style of a new ORG.