

# WHITTINGTON TOWNHOME ASSOCIATION

## WATER SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT GUIDE

The Board of Directors has created this guide to assist homeowners in understanding and properly correcting the water service line leak issues most every homeowner will or have experienced in this community. We hope you will use this document to:

1. Understand the nature and cause of the water line problems,
2. Share this with plumbers you hire to correct the problem, so they better understand the construction and issues with our water lines,
3. Save yourself a lot of time, money and headache from plumbers who (more than not) incorrectly resolve the problem,
4. Take notice of the new procedure for correcting most water line leaks.

***The Problem and Cause*** – During initial construction between 2003 and 2006, the Blue Poly water service lines from each home were buried together in the same trench on many homes throughout the community. This installation is typical of many installations throughout the community. These lines, when touching, will always eventually result in a pin hole size leak. The same issue would happen with any type of material used for the water line if buried together and touching.



The Blue Poly lines are installed from the Water Meter Box to the Cleanout. Notice the white round meter sensor used to read the meter.



From there, the Blue Poly lines transition to copper lines at the Sanitary Sewer Cleanout which is located within five feet of the front of each townhome. The Sanitary Sewer Cleanout is White - 4" PVC with a removable cap.

White PVC cleanout



From the Cleanout - inside and under the concrete slab - the water lines are copper. The copper lines are not buried together and each townhome unit has their own line. The water line leaks are ordinarily NOT caused by the copper line.

***Leak Identification Procedure*** – The easiest method is to observe a wet area outside a townhome. However, an observed wet area could be a leak at any of the homes within a townhome building. If a wet area is observed, lift the lid on the meter (expect bugs) with a flat screwdriver which will allow the digital meter enough light to activate the solar cell. Next, check the flow rate on the meter. If no water is being used within the townhome, the flow rate will be 0.00 gallons per minute. If there is a leak, the flow rate will be significant.

Another method is any unexpected increase in the water bill from Forsyth County Water. If your water bill increases by several dollars more than your typical amount the first step is to check your toilets as one leaking toilet tank can add several dollars to a monthly water bill. Turn off all toilet valves and check the flow rate at the meter. If there is flow rate present and all toilet valves and faucets are off, then there is likely a service line leak. If a leak is suspected, Forsyth County Water will send a tech to check if called by the homeowner.

***Improper Proper Repair Procedures*** – Unfortunately, too many plumbers are not knowledgeable enough to effectively fix the leaks as described. There have been many, too many, homeowners that have paid for repairs only to have the same plumber return to fix the same line again. Some homeowners have even had to pay another plumber a third time before the problem is solved. If your plumber tells you any of the following, we recommend finding another plumber:

- (1) “We can replace a section of the water line by digging up the leaking section”.
- (2) “The leak is under the concrete slab”.
- (3) “The driveway or sidewalk must be cut and repaired”.
- (4) “We will install a new water line around the side of the building to the rear storage closet or to the side of the garage”.
- (5) “They show up with a trenching machine”.
- (6) “We need to remove all of your shrubs.”

The following are photos of improperly done water service line replacement at Whittington:







***Proper Repair Procedures*** – To reiterate, the repair/replacement of the water service line ordinarily does NOT require removing shrubbery, cutting concrete or trenching to install new lines. As an example, in November 2021, a homeowner had just under 100 feet of water line

replaced from the cleanout to the meter at a cost of less than \$2,000. The water lines were replaced under a set of concrete stairs and two sidewalks with no concrete, shrubs or sod damaged. There have been no further water line issues at this home.

***New procedure for water line repairs*** – The issue with the Water Service Line replacement is, unfortunately, a fact of life in this community. The plumbing code did not in 2003, nor does it now, prohibit the burial of water service lines together in the same trench. Until every water line from the meter box to the Sanitary Cleanout has been properly replaced within Whittington, leaks will occur. This is ordinarily not caused by tree roots nor by homeowners parking on the meter boxes (which is prohibited in Whittington). Sadly, damage by improper repair of an adjacent line (in the same trench) often creates another leak. Any time a water line is replaced near your townhome, be observant and pay attention to your own water service bill in case your line is damaged.

**\*\*Effective immediately, homeowners must complete and send a Request for Modification form to HMS before beginning any repairs. The forms are available from both the Whittington website and from the HMS website. Any damage to landscaping, sod, sidewalks, stairs or driveways is the sole responsibility of the homeowner.**