

## Facilities Management from A to Z



Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard  
published monthly in Facilities by Lexis Nexis between 2008 and 2016

# D

## rainage

Surface and foul water sewage systems are often taken for granted. Much of the system is out of sight, underground and generally quite reliable. Therefore it is not unusual to be unsure of what to do or who to contact when things go wrong and the system does not work as it should.

These sewage systems comprise a series of pipes called drains or sewers which convey surface water (e.g. run off from roofs) and foul water (e.g. sink, kitchens, toilets etc.) to a suitable outfall which could be a public sewer, sewage treatment plant, septic tank or a cesspit.

On 1 October 2011 there was a change in UK law which resulted in the responsibility of private drains beyond a property boundary, and all shared sewers which feed into the public sewer system, transferring over to the local Water Company.

A main public sewer is a sewer which is owned and maintained by the water company. They are often under the highway but can also run through fields or gardens. The water companies hold copies of public sewer maps showing their location.

A sewer is a pipe which conveys either foul and/or surface water from more than one property. A sewer can carry foul water or surface water or a combination of both. Where shared sewers run to a main public sewer or STP, the water companies now have responsibility for that sewer. The owner of a property served by a cesspit, septic tank or private STP remains responsible for the whole length of sewer.

A drain is a pipe which conveys foul water or surface water from one property only. The owner or occupier of a property served by a drain which runs to a main public sewer or STP is solely responsible for the maintenance, unblocking and repair of that drain up to the property boundary, where it becomes the responsibility of the water company. The owner of a property served by a cesspit, septic tank or private STP is responsible for the whole length of drain.

Facility managers should make sure that they understand the location, ownership and responsibilities they have for drainage at their properties. Good property stewardship helps to avoid problems with drains.

These include basic rules such as preventing the disposal of oils or fats by emptying into the drainage system, providing alternative disposal solutions for bulky sanitary items such as feminine hygiene products, ensuring easy access to inspection points like manhole covers, inspection chambers, rodding eyes, etc. and ensuring that all access point covers are in good condition and are properly fitted.

*The Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers CIBSE has a bookshop with many useful reference works on drainage system design and maintenance [www.cibseknowledgeportal.co.uk](http://www.cibseknowledgeportal.co.uk)*