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**FIFTEEN MINUTES CAN SAVE HOMEOWNERS
THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN PROPERTY DAMAGE BEFORE THE NEXT STORM**

***Bay Area homeowners can install a free sewer backflow prevention device and
avoid the risk of serious damage to their homes***

Oakland, CA – Consumers looking to save money in the New Year can literally save thousands of dollars in repairs to their homes by installing a sewer Backflow Prevention Device (BPD) provided **free**, courtesy of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). The fifteen minutes it takes to install the simple device could prevent a nasty and costly sewer backflow. According to ABAG, thousands of homeowners are at-risk and many will experience a sewer backflow and damage due to sewer backups into their Bay Area homes this rainy season. The cost to clean up the damage of a sewer backing up in the average Bay Area home could run from \$10,000 to hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the extent of the damage.

“The recent weather has really focused attention on an issue that is totally preventable. Homeowners risk emptying their savings accounts and experiencing a dramatic upset to their daily lives should their home sustain damages from a sewer backup,” says Dave Cortese, ABAG President and San Jose City Vice Mayor. “The good news is that, if homeowners observe some simple, sewer maintenance tips and install an inexpensive backflow-prevention device (BPD), many of these backups are preventable.”

Free BPDs for Bay Area homeowners are available through www.sewersmart.org or by calling (510) 464-7963. Residents can also call their Public Works Department or sanitary district to inquire about BPDs for their community, and residents of San Bruno and Millbrae can pick one up at their respective Public Works Department.

– MORE –

HOMEOWNERS SAVE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS WITH FREE DEVICE

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ABAG's "Be Sewer Smart – Prevent Sewer Backups and Backflows" campaign, launched in 2003 not only includes distribution of free sewer BPDs, but also access to an array of backup prevention resources through ABAG's interactive website, www.sewersmart.org. Through the website, homeowners can receive the free BPD along with instructions for self-installation, as well as links to locally licensed and insured contractors participating in the program. The campaign website also guides homeowners in a step-by-step walk-through of their property and provides a simple risk assessment test to determine if their home is at risk of a sewer backup. Homeowners without Internet access can contact their local sewer district or public works department for backup prevention assistance.

Julie Carter, ABAG PLAN Board of Directors' Chair and Assistant to Dublin City Manager, says homeowners should take action today to prevent a disaster from occurring. "Backup and backflow events have cost local homeowners and their communities as much as \$4 million annually in the past. Installing the backflow prevention device is very important and homeowners should do so before the next wave of heavy rains hits the Bay Area. I encourage homeowners to take the following steps to protect themselves and make the New Year worry and sewage-free," says Carter.

Four Things Homeowners Need to Do Today:

1. Determine if their home is at risk of a sewer backup by visiting www.sewersmart.org.
2. Download the step-by-step property guide that walks homeowners through how to locate cleanouts, laterals, and sewer mains and demonstrates how easy it is to install a Backup Prevention Device—BPD.
3. If the homeowner believes they are at risk, obtain a FREE Backflow Prevention Device by calling (510) 464-7963 or by visiting www.sewersmart.org and install the BPD in your cleanout between storms. Devices will arrive in two business days from date ordered. Homeowners living in San Bruno and Millbrae can pick one up at their respective Public Works Departments.
4. Homeowners should also talk with their property insurance agent to determine the extent of coverage they have for backups in their part of the sewer system. Coverage varies but most companies offer optional coverage for backups and backflows that damage their home.

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ABAG PLAN Corporation is a non-profit corporation formed by ABAG to benefit the citizens of each member community by establishing a stable, cost-effective self-insurance, risk sharing and risk management program for each member. ABAG PLAN was formed in 1985 and currently has 31 member cities and towns in the Bay Area. PLAN provides liability and property coverage, as well as a variety of risk management services such as training, claims management, loss prevention and consulting services. For more details, visit www.abag.ca.gov/plan.

Founded in 1961, ABAG is the official regional planning agency for the nine counties and 101 cities and towns of the Bay Area and is recognized as the first council of governments in California.