

Are You Responsible for Repairing a Sidewalk in Front of Your NYC Home?

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As a kid, you may have heard that rhyme, “step on a crack, break your mother’s back” (sorry mom!). As an adult, a sidewalk crack could mean a whole lot more trouble than that.

Broken sidewalks are considered a danger to pedestrians and [New York City law](#) holds **homeowners responsible** for fixing the sidewalks in front of their house or apartment building. A quick Google search of

“repairing a broken sidewalk” reveals that repairs can cost anywhere between \$1,000 to \$3,000—yikes!

Well, don't freak out yet. You might be eligible for reimbursement for costs, or even have a case for skirting the responsibility altogether. Read on to learn more:

When Are You Required to Fix a Broken Sidewalk?

If you want to take out a new homeowner's insurance policy or renew one, you may be required to fix the sidewalk in front of your home. What usually happens is that the insurance company sends someone out to do an inspection, and if they decide that a broken sidewalk is a trip and fall hazard, you, as the owner, will be required to fix it.

The [NYC Department of Transportation](#) may also send out an inspector to check the sidewalk (they do this from time to time for public safety). If the inspector decides that the sidewalk is unsafe, a notice of sidewalk violation will be sent to you.

What to Expect From a Notice of Sidewalk Violation?

According to the NYC Department of Transportation website, a [Notice of Sidewalk Violation](#) is an official notice issued by NYC DOT to the homeowner stating that the sidewalk is defective. While there is no fine associated with the violation, a violation may complicate selling or refinancing a property. Once you get the violation, you have 75 days to make the necessary repairs.

What Causes Sidewalk Damage?

Several factors can contribute to sidewalk damage including root growth from trees, construction projects, the freeze and thaw of winter, moisture, general foot traffic, or improper installation of the sidewalk in the first place.

What to Do if a Tree is the Culprit?

If a city tree is responsible for sidewalk damage, the Parks Department, through its [Trees and Sidewalks Program](#), will repair sidewalks in front of one, two, and three-family houses.

This problem may not be as unusual as you think. Parks receive 9,000 requests for sidewalk inspections each year. Repairs are prioritized with a rating system that accounts for severity of the damage, amount of pedestrian traffic, along with the size and condition of the tree.

Yet, even owners in locations with the highest rating can still face a long wait time. It could take up to 3 years to have the repairs done, even for the most severe damage. So it's often quicker to have the work done yourself.

If you decide to fix the tree root damage yourself, you will need to hire a [licensed, independent contractor](#) and apply for a [tree work permit](#) before starting any work within 50 feet of a city tree. Tree work permits are usually

issued within 45 days and involve an inspection, and once you receive the permit, it is valid for 90 days. Then you will receive guidelines on how to repair the sidewalk without causing damage to the tree. Once the repairs are finished, both the sidewalk and the tree will be inspected.

In order to get reimbursed, you will need to file a claim with the City Comptroller within 90 days of doing the repairs. Here is a [checklist](#) of documents that you will need.

We know it's a pain and we know you don't want to deal with it (who does!), but at the end of the day, it's in everyone's best interest to keep our sidewalks safe and accessible—and keeping them pretty counts for something, too!

Want more homeowner tips? Try our how-to on [managing water damage](#) or [acquiring a home reno loan](#). Of course, you can always [get in touch](#) if you need any guidance—or the number of a *great* handyman!

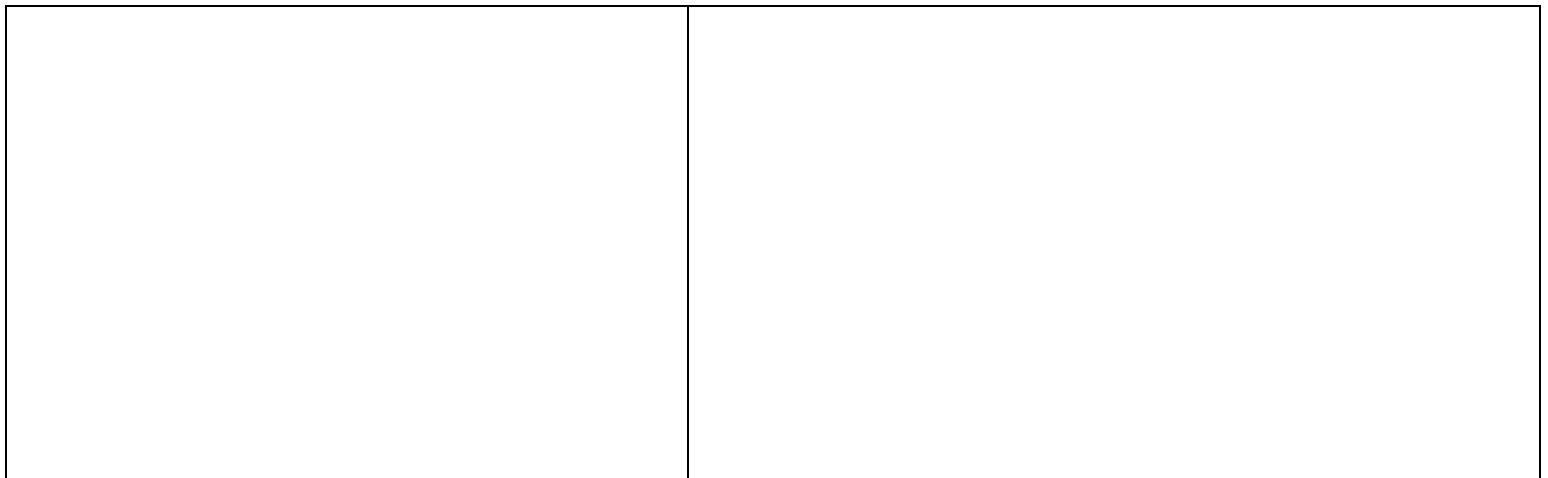
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Posted by Victoria Alexander

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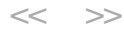
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