



Smoke Testing of the Wastewater Collection System

Dear Property Owner or Resident:

This letter provides notice of smoke testing planned for your neighborhood; important steps residents should take, and background information about why smoke testing is conducted. September 17th through 19th of this year, crews from the City Public Works Department will be evaluating the condition of sanitary sewer lines (wastewater collection system) in your neighborhood and surrounding areas. The work will be completed during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and will involve a technique called smoke testing. During the tests, a nontoxic, white smoke will be released into sanitary sewer lines. Our inspection of where smoke emerges helps us assess the condition of the system and determine specific problems regarding private building-sewer connections as well as sewers in streets.

Notice of Entry

Once testing begins, City crews may have to cross private property to gain access to sanitary sewer lines to observe areas of smoke emergence. City crews working on the project will be wearing reflective safety vests.

Important Steps for Residents to Take

If the building's plumbing is properly installed and maintained, smoke should not enter your home or business. However, smoke will be visible coming from manholes in the street and from plumbing vents on the roof and exterior of buildings. To minimize the chances of smoke entering your premises through dry drain traps, we recommend that residents pour water into seldom used plumbing fixture drains and any floor drains within the house, basement, or garage. Examples of fixture drains include sinks, laundry tubs, washing machine drains, showers, and bathtubs. This should be done before crews begin testing and is **extremely** important to help avoid potential problems during smoke testing. Normally, one quart of water poured into a drain at the time you receive the door hanger is adequate to fill the water trap and prevent entry of smoke during the testing.

If you are present during the testing and smoke does enter your home, open your windows and doors to ventilate the house. If possible, please notify the Public Works crew doing the testing. The smoke is not toxic, will not harm plants or animals and will quickly dissipate, leaving no residue or stains behind. Smoke inside the house could indicate defects in your plumbing. Such defects may allow unpleasant and potentially dangerous sewer gases to enter your house. If a problem is indicated, we urge you to locate and correct the defect as soon as possible.

If someone in your family has a lung ailment, such as emphysema, and should not be exposed to any type of smoke, please call City Hall. Leave your name, address, phone number, and a brief description of the ailment. City Staff will contact you to assess the potential for smoke entering your home and discuss preventive measures that you can take. If necessary, City Staff will closely monitor your home during testing in your area.

It is not necessary for you to be home during the testing. Special arrangements and/or specific scheduling of the testing will only be made in response to health problems as stated above.

Why Smoke Testing is Conducted?

Smoke testing is one of the investigative methods the City implements to identify defects, deterioration, and improper connections in the sewer system. Like other cities across the state, our City has many sanitary sewer lines that are beginning to deteriorate due to their old age. This includes both the public main lines in the streets and utility easements as well as private building-sewer lines (the sanitary sewer line from the building to the connection at the public sewer). These deteriorated sewers contribute to inflow and infiltration (1/1) of storm water and groundwater into the wastewater collection system. Improper connections of down spouts, foundation drains, area drains, and ground water drains to sanitary sewers are also major contributors to 1/1 and are prohibited under the City ordinances. Excessive 1/1 is a serious problem due to the effect it has on the capacity of the wastewater collection system and the wastewater treatment plant. The collection system is designed to carry only so much water and sewage. When overloaded, the system may surcharge (back up), overflowing through manholes and possibly flooding streets. As flows in the wastewater collection system increase, so do the costs to treat and transport the waste, leading to increased sewer user fees. Flow measurement records from the wastewater treatment plant show that local 1/1 problems are a concern. For these reasons, the City has implemented a sewer system evaluation program that includes smoke testing.

Smoke testing is a proven method for identifying defects and improper connections that contribute to 1/1. If defects or improper connections are indicated in your private building sewer, the City will notify you and will work with you to identify actions necessary to correct the problem.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information. We recommend that you keep this notice for future reference. If you have questions about the sewer system evaluation program or about smoke testing, please call the Wastewater Treatment Facility at **(541) 459-5768**.

NOTE: Smoke testing is endorsed by the Environmental Protection Agency in all regions of the country as an integral part of inflow/infiltration reduction programs.

