

# Smoke Testing Sewer Lines

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the benefit to the city for performing a smoke test?**

Smoke testing is used to identify sections of sewer that may have leaks that allow leaks (inflow) during rainfall events. Inflow sources are roof leaders, cellars, yard and area drains, foundation drains, abandoned building sewers, faulty connections, illegal connections and stormwater drainage system cross connections. It also can detect structural damages and leaking joints in sewer pipes and overflow points in sewer systems.

### **What is a 'smoke test'?**

A three- to five-man crew places a smoke blower over manholes and blows smoke through the sewer system. Anywhere the smoke exits, there is potential for stormwater to enter the sewer system and contribute to excess flow at the wastewater treatment plants.

### **How are the smoke test crews recognizable in the field?**

All field personnel will have yellow or orange vests identifying them as field crews.

### **Is the smoke hazardous?**

No. The smoke that comes out of the vent stacks on houses or holes in the ground is non-toxic, non-staining, and white to gray in color, has no odor and creates no fire hazard. The testing process follows industry standards for testing sanitary sewers.

### **Do I need to do anything to prepare my home or business for smoke testing?**

Pour one gallon of water into the drain traps of floors, sinks, showers, and tubs that are dry or rarely used. This will prevent sewer gases and smoke from entering your home or business. If smoke does enter, air out the premises immediately and consult a licensed plumber to address the problem. If harmless smoke can enter through faulty plumbing, the potential exists for dangerous sewer gases to also enter the home.

### **What if smoke comes out of a resident's yard or driveway?**

This could mean that there is a drain on the property that is connected to the house sewer line instead of the storm system. It also could indicate there is not a direct connection, but that the lateral has breaks or cracks in the pipe that drain runoff after it has entered into the soil.

### **Do I need to be home when the smoke testing is performed?**

You do not need to be home and field crews will not need to enter the residence or property. Field crews will record testing, take photos and measure distances so the defects can be located for future repairs.