



Sanitary Sewer System Smoke Testing

Questions and Answers

Q: How does smoke testing work?

A: Field crews blow air and smoke into the sanitary sewer system in the street and monitor where smoke escapes the system.

Q: What are the benefits of smoke testing?

A: Smoke testing is the most efficient and cost effective way to locate and identify where unauthorized water is entering the public portion of the sewer system, and find areas of the sewer system that need improvement. Smoke testing is becoming a requirement nationwide for locating unauthorized water problems that are threatening the ability to properly treat wastewater.

Q: What should I do if smoke gets into the house?

A: Do NOT become alarmed. Open windows to allow ventilation and note the location of the smoke emission. Smoke will clear within a few minutes. Exit the building and notify smoke testing personnel in the area.

Q: What does it mean if smoke enters my house?

A: If smoke enters your home during the test, it may indicate there are deficiencies in the plumbing that may allow potentially dangerous sewer gases to enter. Plumbing fixtures in your home or business are connected to the sanitary sewer, therefore there is potential for smoke to enter if the drains are not connected properly. This happens particularly under the following circumstances:

- The vents connected to your building's sewer pipes are inadequate, defective, or improperly installed.
- The traps under sinks, tubs, basins, etc. are dry, defective, or improperly installed.
- The pipes, connections, or seals in the wastewater drain system inside and/or under your building are damaged, defective, have plugs missing, or are improperly installed. Simply run water down the drain for a minute to ensure that the trap is not dry. It is important to locate dry traps as they could allow sewer gases to enter the home.

