



## **SMOKE TESTING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What exactly is a Smoke Test?**

A three-or four-person crew will use a high capacity blower smoke technique to test each sewer line. Smoke blowers will be placed on manholes, and smoke is blown through the sewer system. Anywhere the smoke exits, there is potential for stormwater to enter the sewer system.

### **Why is the City smoke testing sanitary sewers?**

Smoke testing is one technique utilized to identify how water that doesn't belong is getting into the sanitary sewer system causing it to overflow and back up into buildings during heavy rainfall periods. It can also detect structural damages and leaking joints in sewer pipes that are in need of repair. Springfield manages wastewater (sewage) and rainwater with two separate systems. Wastewater travels through pipes to the treatment plant before being discharged to streams and rivers. Stormwater travels through pipes and is discharged to streams and rivers without going to the treatment plant.

### **Is the smoke that you use hazardous?**

NO! The smoke that comes out of the vent stacks on houses or holes in the ground is non-toxic, harmless, and has no odor. It does not create a fire hazard. It is used all over the United States and has been used in Springfield in the past.

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

Crews are uniformed and carry identification badges. They will have a signed letter from the City authorizing them to do this work. They will travel in vehicles containing logos from CH2M Hill or the City of Springfield.

### **Do I need to do anything to prepare for smoke testing?**

Drain traps should always be filled with water to prevent sewer gases from entering the building. About 24 oz. of water should be poured into infrequently used floor, shower and sink drains, filling the traps to prevent smoke from entering the home. If smoke does enter, the resident should consult with the smoke testing representative conducting the test or with a licensed plumber. If

harmless smoke can enter through faulty plumbing, the potential exists for sewer gases also to enter the home. Should smoke enter your building or structure, contact a member of the smoke testing crew working in the area.

**What if smoke comes out of my yard or driveway?**

This could mean that there is a drain on the property that is connected to the house lateral instead of the storm system. It could also mean that there is not a direct connection, but that the lateral has breaks or cracks in the pipe that allow rainwater to enter.

**If there is smoke in my yard, what does that mean?**

Contact the representative in the street conducting the test. You may need to disconnect a drain or line or replace a portion of the house lateral which would require a licensed plumber.

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

Homeowners do not need to be home and at no time will field crews need to enter the residence. Field inspectors will be noticeable documenting the testing, taking photos and taking measurements so that they defects may be found at a later date and repaired.

**What if the test yields no smoke defects?**

Obviously, if the sanitary sewer line and the lateral are in good condition, and there are no drainage facilities connected to them, the smoke has no place to go other than up the house vent stack. However sometimes the smoke doesn't appear at all even though there is a problem. Crew members are trained to identify these "suspect" situations and perform follow-up testing using other methods.