

SANITARY SEWER SMOKE TESTING

What is smoke testing?

Smoke testing is a method used to identify sections of the sanitary sewer collection system that have defects such as cracks, leaks or faulty connections allowing rainwater to enter this underground pipe network.

Since the sanitary sewer system is only designed to handle sewage, the addition of rainwater and storm water causes many problems including additional costs for the collection and treatment systems. The Albany Public Works Department conducts smoke-testing on our system to help locate and repair as many of these issues as possible so that a heavy rain event will not overwhelm the sanitary sewer system or interfere with the operation of the wastewater treatment plant.

During testing, workers will blow a dense artificial smoke into the sanitary sewer system. The smoke will escape again through openings such as holes in manhole covers and plumbing vent pipes located on or near rooftops. Smoke will also escape through defects such as cracks or breaks, open or broken cleanout covers, damaged or defective manhole frame seals, illegally connected roof or floor drains and any other opening(s).

Smoke should only enter your home if the traps in your home are dry or defective, or if you have uncapped or broken drain pipes. You should pour some water down your drains or unused plumbing fixture(s) to insure that the drain trap will be effective – run the water through these fixtures for approximately one minute.

If you detect smoke on your premises, **DO NOT BE ALARMED**. The smoke is **ODORLESS, NON-TOXIC, AND NON-STAINING**. It will dissipate quickly. It will not harm pets or plants or leave a residue. Open a door or window for ventilation. Our police and fire personnel will be aware of the testing and will be able to tell you the difference between smoke from the testing and smoke that could result from a fire unrelated to the testing.



Typical areas where the test-smoke will escape from when leaks or breaks are detected.