

FAQs

Frequently asked questions about smoke testing of sanitary sewer lines

1 What is the purpose of smoke testing?

Smoke testing is one of the best, most cost-effective ways to locate defects in the city's main sewer line and the service lateral that connects to a resident's property.

2 What is a smoke test?

Smoke testing is the process of blowing artificially produced smoke into a blocked off pipeline to see where smoke emerges. When smoke is blown into the sewer, crews will spread out over the test area to watch for any smoke that may escape from underground. If the sewer line is in good condition, the blown in smoke will emerge from manhole lids and vents on house roofs. If the line has defects, the smoke will find the break in the line and escape from the break. It is not unusual to see smoke coming from unusual places when smoke tests are being performed - such as cracks in the street or in residential yards (PICTURED BELOW).



3 Will smoke come into my house or activate my smoke detector?

Probably not. But it is possible smoke could enter a home or business in the test area through a dry drain trap or via another plumbing defect such as untrapped drains, cracked pipes, or improperly installed dishwashers or garbage disposals. IF SMOKE ENTERS YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS, it is possible sewer gas could enter as well and you should notify the city's Wastewater Department so an inspector can investigate the source of the smoke. Smoke testing can activate smoke alarms if the smoke enters a home or building. If this occurs, open your windows to ventilate the smoke. If you are unsure if the smoke alarm has been activated by the test, call 911.

4 Is the smoke hazardous?

No. The smoke used during the testing is not harmful to people, pets or plantlife. It will not stain clothes or home furnishings. While the smoke is non-toxic, if it appears inside of your home during the test, you should open windows to ventilate the smoke.

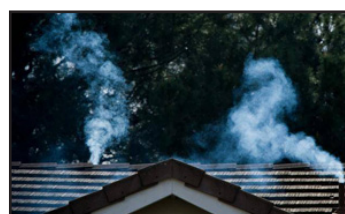
5 Do I need to be home during the test? Should I do anything to prepare?

You do not need to be home when the smoke test is performed. Beforehand, run water into any unused drains etc. to create a water seal in the pipe. This will keep smoke from entering through the dry drain.

6 Why do I see smoke in my front yard and venting out of my neighbor's roof?



<< Smoke emerging from your yard could indicate a break or other defect in the sewer line. Or it could be because of something as simple as a missing cap on your lateral line.



<< Smoke emerging from roof vents on your home or your neighbor's home is good. This is where the smoke should be released from.