

# Sanitary Sewer Smoke Testing Public Notice

To All Residents and Occupants of Edgehill:

The Southampton County Public Utilities Department over the past few months has been conducting smoke testing of the sanitary sewer system. **This testing will begin in Edgehill on June 11, 2019** weather permitting. This study will involve the opening and entering of manholes in the streets and public utility easements. An important task of the testing will be to locate breaks and defects in the sewer system. The smoke will also reveal sources of where storm and other surface water enter the sewer system.

A special non-toxic smoke will be used in these tests. The smoke is manufactured for this purpose, leaves no residuals or stains, and has no effect on plant or animal life. The smoke has a distinctive, but not unpleasant, odor. Visibility and odor last only a few minutes where there is adequate ventilation.

Because the plumbing appliances in your house or building are connected to the sanitary sewer system, some smoke may enter your home or place of business if the:

- Vents connected to your building's sewer pipes are inadequate, defective, or improperly installed.
- Traps under sinks, tubs, basins, showers and other drains are dry, defective, improperly installed, or missing.
- Pipes, connections, and seals of the wastewater drain system in and under your buildings are damaged, defective, have plugs missing, or are improperly installed.

All residents are advised that if traces of this smoke or its odor enter your house or building, it is an indication that gases and odors from the sewer also may enter. These can be both unpleasant and dangerous, as well as a health risk to the occupants.

Please notify us before we conduct the test if you have any of the following situations:

- Dogs, birds, or other pets that will be confined alone in the building during the test.
- A person who will be alone and is an invalid or sleeping during the test.
- Any persons with respiratory problems who will be in the building.
- Elderly persons who will be alone and might be alarmed or confused if they see smoke.

Should smoke enter your home or business, you may contact a member of the smoke testing crew working in your area. The crew member will be able to help and check with you as to where the smoke has entered your building. Location, identification, and correction of the source of smoke that enters your building are urgently advised. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

The information gained from this testing will be used to improve your sewer services. Should you have any questions on this matter, please contact Amanda Smith at 757-653-3015.

# Frequently asked questions and answers about Smoke Testing

## **1. What is the purpose of Smoke Testing?**

A wastewater system or sanitary sewer system is designed to transport wastewater to a treatment facility. In dry weather it usually does so without issue. However, in wet weather, storm-related runoff may leak into the sewer system, resulting in an increased volume of flow the system wasn't designed to handle. This situation is called inflow and is the process of storm water runoff getting into the sanitary sewer system. Inflow such as depicted here can result in an overburdening of the sanitary sewer system, which may result in Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs). Smoke testing is one of the best cost effective ways to locate defects in the main sewer line and service lateral that connects to a resident. This is why many cities and municipalities implement smoke testing programs as a cost-effective method to assess the condition of sanitary sewer system.

## **2. What is a Smoke Test?**

High-capacity blowers are used to pump smoke into a manhole and smoke is pushed into the system and emerges from cracks in the sidewalk and at a downstream manhole. Smoke testing is the process of injecting artificially produced smoke into a blocked off pipeline segment to see where the smoke emerges. If the sewer is in good condition then the forced smoke will emerge from manhole lids along the line and house vents on the roof. If the line has defects, the smoke will find the break and try to escape through the break. It is not unusual to see smoke come up from peculiar places, such as cracks in the street, or in residential yards during smoke testing. While the smoke is being injected into the sewers, utility crew members will observe the smoke test area and notate the places smoke escapes.

## **3. Is The Smoke Hazardous?**

The smoke utilized during smoke testing is LiquiSmoke™ and is commonly used in the industry. The smoke is not harmful to you your pets or house plants. It will not harm or stain clothes, drapes, or furniture. It is not flammable and does not create a fire hazard. While the smoke is not considered harmful, it is recommended to avoid prolonged periods of exposure. If smoke appears from a drain inside your residence, open windows and ventilate well to dissipate the smoke.

## **4. Will I have smoke coming into my house?**

Probable not, but it is possible that smoke could enter a residence through a drain trap which has dried out or some other plumbing defect such as an un-trapped washing machine drain, cracked pipe, garbage disposal or dishwasher not installed correctly. Note that if smoke can enter your home then dangerous sewer gases can also. If smoke gets inside of your home locate one of the smoke testing crew member and they will assist you in locating where the smoke entered your home.

## **5. I see smoke in my front yard and venting out my neighbor's roof**

That may indicate a break or other defect in the sewer line. A defect in an underground sewer pipe is allowing smoke to escape up through the ground. Roof vents are where the smoke should be released or seen. This is good!

#### **6. I don't see any smoke at all!**

This may be good. If the sanitary sewer line is in a state of good condition, the smoke will migrate along the sewer network and appear at a distant manhole or some other area. The utility crew expects to observe smoke, such as the sewer vent pipe on top of a residence. But in some cases, the smoke doesn't reappear at all. Since it has to go somewhere, then a process of investigation and research begins to try and determine where the smoke is ending up.

#### **7. Should I do anything to prepare?**

During smoke testing, the utility crew force smoke into the sanitary sewer. The possibility exists for smoke to enter a residence due to infrequently used drains or a defect in the sewer pipes. A drain trap is the S-shaped curvature or elbow in the pipe typically found under sinks, exists to capture and hold water in the trap's curve. This water in the trap creates a type of seal and blocks gases from rising up through the drain and into the home. This trap will also keep the smoke from entering your home. A dry drain trap could be found in drains which are not used regularly and the water has evaporated. Water should be ran in these isolated areas monthly to maintain the drain seal in proper operating condition.

#### **8. Do I have to be home when smoke testing is being performed?**

Homeowners do not need to be home and at no time will a utility crew member need to enter your home.

#### **9. Can the smoke activate the smoke alarm?**

Yes, smoke alarms may be activated during smoke testing if some enters your home. If it does, open windows and doors for ventilation. If you are not sure or have any doubts about the smoke call 911.

#### **10. I'm not going to be home but I have pets in the house, what should I do?**

The smoke is not harmful to pets, but you can place your pet in an area of the home that has no plumbing. If your plumbing is properly connected and all the drain traps are sealed, there should not be any problems.