



# Smoke Testing

## Coming Soon To A Sewer Near You

### Q. What is smoke testing?

**A.** Smoke testing is a safe, efficient and cost-effective method to look for places where breaks and cracks may be allowing rainwater into the sanitary sewer system. Excessive amounts of stormwater can overburden wastewater treatment plants, which end up unnecessarily processing clear water. That costs money, wastes resources and takes up capacity meant to last for years.

The testing also can reveal areas around a home or building where improper connections to the sewer system are made, as well as identify possible sources of sewer odors.

### Q. Will anyone need to enter my home?

**A.** No. Using a machine, work crews will blow the smoke into the sewer system through the manholes on the street. The smoke will fill the main line as well as any connections, then follow the path of the leak to the surface, quickly revealing the source of the problem.

### Q. Will the smoke enter my home?

**A.** The smoke will not enter a home if the plumbing is in good condition or if drain traps contain some water.

Outside, it is normal for smoke to be seen coming from roof vents, building foundations, manhole covers and yard cleanouts. Smoke coming from the vents on the roofs of homes indicates to the work crew that smoke has filled all sewers.



During the testing, smoke will escape from roof vents. That's normal and indicates the smoke has worked its way through the sewer system.

Smoke will enter your home if the vents connected to your building's sewer pipe are inadequate, defective or improperly installed, if the traps under sinks, tubs, basins, showers and other drains are dry, defective, improperly installed or missing, or if the pipes, connections and seals of the wastewater drain system in and under your building are damaged, defective, has plugs missing, or are improperly installed.

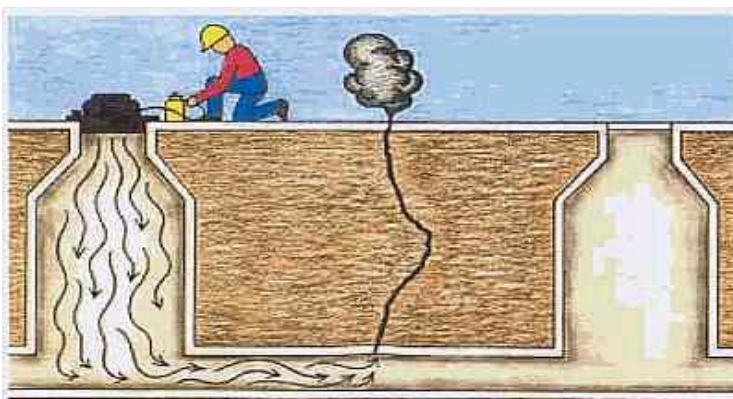
### Q. Is the smoke safe?

**A.** Yes. This method has been safely used in many communities for years. The smoke is specially manufactured for this process. It is not a true "smoke," but rather, a highly visible mist. It will not harm you or your children, pets or plants. It will not leave residues or stains. The smoke dissipates within minutes of being introduced into the system.

### Q. Is it OK to stay inside during the testing?

**A.** Yes. However, since any smoke may create minor irritations for some people with respiratory

The smoke will quickly reveal the source of any breaks or cracks in sewer lines.



difficulties, those who have asthma, emphysema or other breathing problems are advised to avoid direct contact with the substance.

## Smoke Gets In Your Lines



### Q. Is there anything I should do to prepare my home for the testing?

A. To help keep the smoke from entering the building, run or pour water into drains that aren't used often, such as in guest bathrooms or in the garage. Run the water for approximately one minute.

### Q. What if the smoke does enter my house?

A. If you see or smell the smoke inside your home, this could indicate that gases and odors from the sewer system also are entering. Notify the work crew immediately. Although we cannot correct any problems on private property, we can help identify the source so that you know what action to take.



Natural places for the smoke to exit include roof vents (above), sewer cleanouts (left), and manhole covers (below).

After you have worked with the crew, open the windows to provide some ventilation. The smoke will dissipate quickly.

### Q. Will the smoke set off my fire alarm?

A. No, nor will it create a fire hazard.

Hillsborough County Fire Rescue will be notified in advance so they will know the difference between the testing and a true emergency.



### Q. Will rodents be smoked out?

A. No. The smoke can help detect broken building sewers where there is a potential for rodents to enter.

### Q. Is there anything else I should know?

A. As part of the testing procedure, you may notice paint markings on the street, curbs, manholes or grass. These

markings are a reference for the testing crew. The paint is temporary and will disappear over time.

### Q. What happens if the testing locates a leak or a bad connection to public lines?

A. The work crew will document the information, which will be used by Water Resource Services to determine repair priorities and programs.

Giving you our best.



**For More Information**  
Call the Line Maintenance Northwest  
Service Area office at 554-5010, weekdays  
between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.