



# CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS



## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Dear Homeowner:

The Newport News Department of Public Works, Wastewater Division is conducting a sanitary sewer evaluation program designed to eliminate ground water and storm water from entering the sanitary sewer system in your area. We will be evaluating the sewer in your area from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

Smoke testing is one part of this evaluation. Smoke may be seen coming from roof vents, building foundations, or manhole covers. The smoke will not enter your home if the home is properly plumbed and vented, and water traps contain water. The smoke is a non-toxic/odorless substance, which is clean and harmless to humans, pets, food, and material goods.

Any presence of smoke within the house should be reported to the Wastewater Division through 311 at 933-2311 or to the crews working in the street conducting the tests. Please avoid unnecessary exposure to the smoke. The smoke is relatively harmless, but smoke of any kind can be irritating to the nasal passages for some people. If you experience smoke irritation, it should be temporary and quickly disappear after exposure has ceased. If you or any member of your household have a health condition that you feel we need to be aware of, please contact us at the number indicated above. Some common questions are answered on the other side of this notice.

If during smoke testing, the City finds a blockage in the line they are smoke testing, the line will have to be cleaned by a waterpower jet flusher. This equipment, which uses water pressure to clean the pipes, could potentially cause an increase in pressure to your sewer system. You can continue to use your toilets as usual, but when not in use during the listed dates, it is recommended that you place a towel over your toilet bowl(s) and then close the seat and lid. This will prevent any possible water spray from spilling out into your bathroom. Additionally there is the possibility of the water being removed from the traps in sinks or bath tubs. If you notice an odor, add water to the sink and that will fill the trap back up and seal out the odor. If there are any signs of backup problems or you have any questions about this procedure, please call 933-2311.

Another part of evaluating the condition of the sanitary sewer is televising the sewer main lines, including the ones in front of your home. The mainlines have to be cleaned first by a waterpower jet flusher. Please follow the above procedures.

If we are unable to conduct the sanitary sewer evaluation in your area due to an unexpected emergency, you will be notified with an updated letter as soon as possible. If you should have any further questions, do not hesitate to call the number listed above.

Sincerely,

Hubert Benthall  
Wastewater Administrator

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513 Oyster Point Road, Newport News, VA 23602

## SMOKE TESTING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Q. Is the smoke harmful?
    - A. No, it may make you cough, but it is not harmful to your health or your pets, and will not harm clothing, drapes, or furniture.
  2. Q. What should you do if smoke gets into the house?
    - A. Contact Public Works/Wastewater Division through 311 at 933-2311 or the Crew Chief working in the area. Open windows for ventilation. The smoke will soon dissipate. On the day before the evaluation is scheduled to start, you should check to see that all traps under basins, washing facilities, and floor drains have water in them.
  3. Q. What is the purpose of smoke testing?
    - A. Occurrences of smoke indicate leaks in the sanitary sewer system and roof drain connections. Smoke testing can help locate bad connections that homeowners or occupants are not aware of. If a problem is found with the sewer lateral on the city right-of-way, we will schedule repair or replacement of the line.
  4. Q. I will not be at home during smoke testing and have pets in the house. What should I do?
    - A. The smoke is not harmful to pets. It would be a good idea to leave several windows partially open for ventilation, should any smoke enter the building. If you have proper connections and all of the traps have water in them, there should not be any problems.
  5. Q. If smoke gets in the house, how long does it take the smoke to dissipate?
    - A. With adequate ventilation the smoke will dissipate quickly.
  6. Q. Can smoke stop up the sewer?
    - A. There is no way smoke can stop up a sewer. The smoke is made up of a vaporous substance.
  7. Q. What happens if you find a bad sewer or lack of traps in a building?
    - A. This information will be documented and given to the Wastewater management. It will be incumbent upon them to determine what steps are necessary to remedy the problem.
  8. Q. Will rodents be smoked out?
    - A. No. However, the smoke will detect broken building sewers where rodents have access. Owners will be notified to repair broken building sewers.
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