



Charles Town Utility Board FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING SMOKE TESTING

1. What is the purpose of smoke testing?

The purpose of “smoke” testing is to find potential points of inflow and infiltration in the public portion of the sanitary sewer system that could lead to high flows during storms and snow melt events. “Smoke” testing can help locate the following:

- a. Buildings that have downspouts, cellar, yard or basement drains, and sump pumps connected to the public sewer system.
- b. Points of groundwater or surface water intrusion into the sewer
- c. Any cross connection between sanitary and storm drains
- d. Defective sewer connections that could allow sewer gases into a building.

When you receive notice that smoke testing will take place, you should check to see that all drain traps under basins, washing facilities and floor drains have water in them. To do so, simply flush toilets and run water into all drains.

2. What are the benefits of “smoke” testing?

“Smoke” testing is the most efficient and cost-effective way to locate and identify where unauthorized water is entering the public portion of the sewer system. The “smoke” is harmless and will disappear after a few minutes. The testing is a cost-effective way to find areas of the system that need improvement. “Smoke” testing will also help identify plumbing leaks in buildings. Sewer gases can cause health problems for building occupants. “Smoke” testing is becoming a requirement nationwide for locating unauthorized water problems that are threatening the ability to properly treat wastewater and costing wastewater treatment facilities millions of dollars.

3. How long will the testing take?

While crews might be in your area for a few hours during the testing period, each actual “smoke” test setup takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Most houses will only be within the testing area for one or two tests.

4. How will residents or businesses know when CTUB is “smoke” testing?

CTUB will notify customers prior to “smoke” testing the portion of the sanitary sewer system that is connected to their homes/businesses with fliers that will be left on doorknobs the week prior to the testing.

CTUB will also notify the appropriate Fire Department before and after each test period.

5. What should I do to prepare for “smoke” testing?

When you receive notice that “smoke” testing will take place, you should:

- Check to see that all drain traps under basins, washing facilities and floor drains contain water; simply flush toilets and run or pour water into all drains, including unused fixtures and floor drains.
- If there is an individual in your home or business who has respiratory problems and/or mobility limitations, or if you have any additional questions, contact Hydrostructures Superintendent, Justin Lemonds at (910) 690-3114 or Charles Town Utility Board (304) 725-2316.

6. Is the “smoke” harmful?

No. It may make you cough, but it is not harmful to your health and will not harm clothing, drapes, or furniture.

7. What should I do if “smoke” gets into the house?

If smoke enters your home or business during testing, open windows to allow ventilation and note the location of the smoke. Notify Hydrostructures Superintendent, Justin Lemonds at (910) 690-3114 or Charles Town Utility Board (304) 725-2316. Smoke should clear within several minutes.

8. I will not be home during smoke testing and have pets in the house. What should I do?

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 plumbing connections and all of the drain traps have water in them, there should not be any problems.

9. If smoke gets into the house, how long does it take to dissipate?

This will depend upon how much smoke enters the building and how much ventilation you can provide.

10. Can smoke stop up the sanitary sewer?

No. The smoke is made of a vaporous substance.

11. What happens if the city finds a bad sanitary sewer connection or lack of traps in a building?

This information will be documented by Hydrostructures and given to the Charles Town Utility Board for review.

12. Will rodents be smoked out?

No, but the smoke will detect where rodents have access.