

Smoke Testing Information

Lansing – 2024 Smoke Testing



The City of Lansing is continuing efforts to repair the city's aging sanitary sewer system. In the next several weeks, customers may notice smoke coming from their sanitary sewers. This is part of a test to find leaks in the system. The non-toxic, odorless smoke is blown into sewer manholes, goes through the pipes, and comes out where there are broken pipes or where roof downspouts, outside area drains, or foundation drains are connected to the sanitary sewers.

What exactly is a smoke test?

A small crew will use a high capacity blower smoke technique to test each sewer pipe. Smoke blowers are placed on manholes and smoke is blown through the sewer system. Anywhere the smoke exits, there is potential for stormwater or groundwater to enter the sewer system.

Why is the City smoke testing sanitary sewers?

It is necessary to perform a smoke test because it is important to locate defects in the sewer lines. Wherever defects are present in the pipe, the potential for stormwater and groundwater to enter the sewer system exists. This is especially problematic in the event of heavy rainstorms, where the rainwater infiltrates and overflows the sewer lines and can cause the sewage backup into buildings. In addition, when the rainwater infiltrates the sewage lines, this causes the wastewater treatment plant to treat water that does not need to be treated, increasing costs unnecessarily.

Is the smoke that's used hazardous?

NO! The smoke that exits the vent stacks on houses or holes in the ground is non-toxic, harmless, and has no odor. It does not create a fire hazard, and it is commonly used all over the country.

When will smoke testing be performed in my neighborhood?

The smoke testing will take place from June 17th to June 20th. A notice in the form of a door hanger will be distributed 2-7 days before the testing will take place in your area.

Where will the smoke testing take place?

The smoke testing will take place in your area if you receive a smoke testing notice on your door.

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Do I need to do anything to prepare for smoke testing?

Drain traps should always be filled with water to prevent sewer gases from entering the building. The day before the smoke testing, pour approximately 24 ounces of water into infrequently used floor, shower, and sink drains, filling the traps to prevent smoke from entering the home. If smoke does enter, the resident should consult with the smoke testing representative conducting the test or with a licensed plumber. If harmless smoke can enter through faulty plumbing, the potential exists for sewer gases to also enter the home.



What if smoke comes out of my yard or driveway?

Smoke coming out of your yard may indicate a variety of breaks or cracks exist in the drain or sanitary sewer service lateral (house lateral) on your property. Contact the representative in the street conducting the test. You may need to disconnect a drain or line or replace a portion of the house lateral which would require a licensed plumber. A house lateral is the sewer pipe that runs from your home to the City's sewer system in the street.

Do I need to be home when the smoke testing is performed?

Homeowners do not need to be home and at no time will field crews need to enter the residence. Field inspectors will be documenting the testing, taking photos, and taking measurements so that the defects may be found at a later date and repaired.

What should I do if smoke enters my house?

Smoke will only enter your house if there are defects in your plumbing. If smoke does enter your home, there is no need to panic, as the smoke is non-hazardous. Please inform the field technicians who are conducting the test if smoke enters your home. To get rid of the smoke, ventilate the room by opening doors and windows and the smoke should dissipate quickly. Using a fan to blow smoke out of your house would speed up the process but is not necessary.

Questions? Concerns?

Contact the GBA representative, Ben Bogue, at
(913) 577-8354.

Be sure to reference the project name:
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