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CITY OF BALTIMORE

CATHERINE E. PUGH, Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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The Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) is implementing a “smoke testing” program for City sanitary sewers as a way to identify any inflow or infiltration of water into our system. This work is part of DPW’s program to repair the City’s sewer system and minimize the opportunities for sanitary sewer overflows and basement backups. At times, rain water and groundwater can infiltrate, or enter, the sewer system through small cracks or leaks in the sanitary sewers. When it enters the sewer pipes, this clear water reduces the available capacity for wastewater, which can contribute to overflows and basement backups. Smoke testing will help identify the points in the pipes where sources of rain water and groundwater can enter. By observing where the smoke escapes from the sewer system, we can identify potential openings where clear water might enter the sanitary sewer system, enabling us to know areas in need of repair or replacement.

DPW has hired **Savin Engineers** to smoke test the sewer system in your neighborhood. The smoke testing will take place in your community starting **August 6<sup>th</sup>**, with work scheduled to begin each day at 9:00 a.m. and ending no later than 5:00 p.m. Smoke testing will involve directing a stream of **HARMLESS, NON-TOXIC** smoke into the public sewer system in order to observe and locate system defects. Because your homes are connected to the public sewer system, smoke may be seen coming from roof vents, building foundations, or manhole covers.

The smoke will not enter your home or building if it is properly plumbed and vented, and if the water traps contain water. To ensure your plumbing (i.e. sinks, shower stalls, etc.) and inside floor drains are properly sealed prior to the smoke test, run some water into each drain to fill the trap so that no smoke enters your home through dry drain traps. During the test, it is normal for smoke to escape from the vent pipe through the roof of your home and is no cause for alarm.

Smoke may enter your home or business even if the water traps are full; this could indicate a private plumbing problem. If this happens, open windows for ventilation to allow the smoke to dissipate quickly and then notify Ms. Kelly Ferguson that this has occurred. Please call or email Ms. Ferguson at (410)396-0009 or [Kelly.Ferguson@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Kelly.Ferguson@baltimorecity.gov). If this situation occurs, the City of Baltimore strongly advises you to contact a licensed plumber to check for faulty plumbing fixtures and take appropriate measures to repair defects.

Segments of some public sewers are located within residential or commercial properties in defined easements. In those cases, the smoke testing inspectors may have to access the front or back of these properties to identify locations where smoke is appearing. Property owners are not required to be present and the inspectors will not enter any building. Each smoke test observation will be recorded and photographed for use during the engineering analysis phase of the project.

If someone in your household is homebound or has a respiratory condition, please call or email Ms. Ferguson, and give your name, address and phone number prior to testing. We will discuss your situation to allay any concerns you may have.