

Smoke Testing

Smoke testing is done on underground sanitary sewer systems to identify potential defects.

The process uses a white, odorless, non-toxic smoke that is blown into the sanitary sewer system through a sewer manhole. As the smoke travels through the pipes, it will exit at locations where stormwater or groundwater may be allowed to enter the system. This may be due to damaged pipes, broken or improper connections, or other issues. You may see white smoke coming up from the ground or out of vents, gutter downspouts, or storm drains.

When stormwater or groundwater enters the sanitary sewer system it takes up valuable capacity in our sanitary sewer lines, especially during heavy rain events. Reducing the amount of rainwater in the sanitary sewer system saves money for Metro Water Services (MWS) and its ratepayers and helps prevent capacity related overflows.

On occasion, the smoke may enter homes or businesses through drains or defects in private plumbing. DO NOT BE ALARMED. The smoke is not harmful to people or pets. This can often be prevented by pouring a gallon of water into any floor drains and sink or tub drains that are not regularly used.

MWS uses contractors to perform this work. The contractor will provide advance notice to residential and business customers in areas where smoke testing is to be performed. This is typically done in the form of a door hanger that provides a description of smoke testing as well as contact information for the contractor conducting the work. If you have any questions regarding the smoke testing timeline, please contact the contractor. If you have questions regarding Metro Water Services sanitary sewer system, visit the [Clean Water Nashville](#) website or contact us at 615-862-4600.

When smoke testing reveals defects in the portion of the system owned by MWS, Clean Water Nashville may take steps to schedule and conduct repairs to improve the performance of the sewer system. The program may also notify customers of repairs or corrections that are the responsibility of the homeowner.