



# Northeast Branch Sewer Basin Sanitary Sewer Study

## The Next Phase of Sewer Study Will Include Smoke Testing

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) began conducting a comprehensive sanitary sewer study of the Northeast Branch Sewer Basin in December 2009. This pro-active study is highlighting potential sewer problems to avoid costly major sewer repairs and support our efforts to protect the environment and public health.

During the months of July, August and September, 2010, WSSC will begin a process called Smoke Testing in the Northeast Branch Sewer Basin. This procedure will locate defects such as sewer line cracks and storm sewer cross connections. WSSC will notify all residents and businesses when field crews will be in their community within 24 to 48 hours, with a door hanger notice that will provide specific information and contact telephone numbers.



*Smoke test conducted on open manhole*

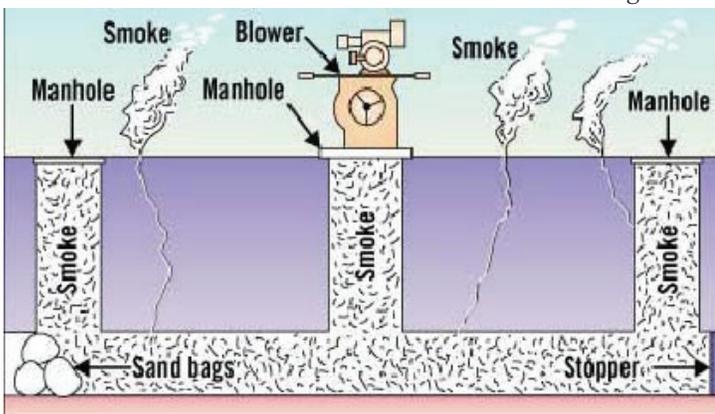
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### What is Smoke Testing?

Smoke testing is an easy, cost effective way of locating sewer problems with little disruption to the system or to county residents. To conduct the smoke testing process, the following steps will be taken:

- Opening of manholes on county streets.
- Placing a large blower on top of the open manhole and forcing non-toxic smoke into the system.

Figure 1



As smoke is sent through the sewer lines, it will be forced through any opening or defect in the system, as shown in Figure 1. The white or gray smoke exiting the system is easily observed by the field crew performing the test, who will log and map each occurrence for further analyzing.

## WSSC Wants You to Know:

- **At no time will field crews have to enter any residences or businesses.** However, should a smoke source be visible, the field crews will need to enter the grounds to investigate and log the source.
- **The smoke is non-toxic, leaves no residue and creates no fire hazard.** The smoke, which is 50% atmospheric moisture, has a slight odor similar to burning paper and may cause minor throat irritation if directly inhaled. Persons with respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis or emphysema should be careful when exposed to smoke of any kind.
- **All residents receiving a smoke testing notice from WSSC will be instructed to pour approximately one (1) gallon of water down any unused drains.** This will help to prevent smoke from entering the house via seldom used drains. Smoke will enter a home or building through defective plumbing or if drain traps are dry.
- **Please be advised that if smoke enters a house during this test, it is likely that sewer gases are entering as well.** It would be advisable to call a licensed plumber to repair any defective plumbing detected during this process.
- **Residents presence at home is not required during the tests.** All public safety authorities have been notified of this event.

All WSSC contractors have been authorized by the Commission to perform a variety of activities related to the testing and analysis work needed to complete the Northeast Branch Sewer Basin Sanitary Sewer Study. The study is scheduled for completion on or before December 31, 2011.

WSSC is the 8 largest water and wastewater utilities in the nation, serving 1.8 million residents in Prince George's and Montgomery counties. To report water or sewer emergency, customers may call WSSC's 24-hour Emergency Response number at (301) 206-4002.



*Smoke exiting the sewer system indicating defects*



*Smoke exiting the sewer system*

**Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission is entrusted by our community to provide safe and reliable water, life's most precious resource, and return clean water to our environment, all in an ethically and financially responsible manner.**