

Smoke Testing to be Conducted This Week

The Town of Belhaven's Sewer Department will be conducting smoke testing on its sewer main lines the week of September 27 through October 1. If you have questions about smoke testing, please continue reading.

Smoke testing is a common method of testing underground wastewater lines. This testing is done to ensure our citizens are provided with the best possible safe, efficient and environmentally sound sewer services. Smoke testing has been recommended by the EPA as a great way to identify problems in the wastewater system.

Smoke testing is a relatively simple process that consists of blowing smoke mixed with large volumes of air into the sewer line usually induced through the manhole. The smoke travels the path of least resistance and quickly shows up at sites that allow surface water inflow. Smoke will identify broken manholes, illegal connections including roof drains, sump pumps and yard drains, uncapped lines and even will show cracked mains and laterals, providing there is a passageway for the smoke to travel to the surface.

A Town employee will use a machine to force smoke into a sewer line through a manhole in your neighborhood. If there's an underground break in the line, the smoke will rise out of that break – through the ground – as seen in this illustration.

Be Prepared - Prior to testing, please pour two gallons of water in seldom-used sinks or floor drains to prevent smoke from entering your home or business. The smoke will only enter your home or business if you have defective plumbing, dried-up sink traps or floor drains, and should only affect your home for approximately 15 minutes. Smoke should not come into your house through your sprinkler system either.

It is odorless and 100 percent safe. If you are away during the test, it will not hurt any pets or household plants. The smoke does not leave behind a residue, stain upholstery or become a fire hazard.



If you are outside and see smoke coming from a vent stack on a house, don't worry. The house is not on fire. This is normal. However, smoke coming from holes in the ground is not normal and is considered a defect. Town staff will photograph and log all defects like this. We will also contact property owners if a defect is found on private property.

If you have additional question during the testing period, please contact Steve Hall at 252-943-1400.