

SMOKE TESTING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is the City performing smoke tests?

A. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency required the City to decommission a wastewater treatment plant #1, starting in 2014, due to the failure of the gravity filters and exceedances of the suspended solids limits under the NPDES permit. With this decommission, the City contracted Strand and Associates to evaluate our system conveyance between the decommissioned plant and our active Treatment Plant. Strand Associates reported to the City Council in 2017 that the City should look at addressing stormwater inflow into the sanitary sewer or build a larger trunkline sewer to handle the extreme flow increases during wet weather. Instead of performing the smoke testing, a larger sewer was designed. Before construction of this project moved forward, the current Council wants to look into addressing stormwater inflow into the sewer as a possible alternative to the larger trunkline project across three private properties on the south side of town.

2. What is the benefit to my community?

A. The City is performing smoke tests to determine if there are any illegal connections to, or defects in, the sanitary sewer system. A defect could allow storm water into the sanitary sewer system which can cause basement backups, sewer overflows, and higher costs of treatment.

3. What is smoke testing?

A. Using odorless, non-toxic smoke and blowers, smoke is forced through the sanitary sewer pipes. Anywhere the smoke exits, there is potential for rain or groundwater to seep into the sewer system.

4. Is the smoke hazardous?

A. Not at all. The smoke is non-toxic, harmless, and has no odor. It does not create a fire hazard.

5. Will smoke enter my house or business?

A. If you have faulty plumbing fixtures or illegal connections to the sanitary sewer, smoke will enter your home. The illegal connections that will allow smoke into your home are basement floor drains, footing tiles, and sump pumps connected illegally to the sanitary sewer. Dry P-traps in sinks and showers as well as failing wax rings under your toilet can also allow smoke inside. It is best to pour some water in drains before the smoke testing begins.

6. What are examples of an illegal connection?

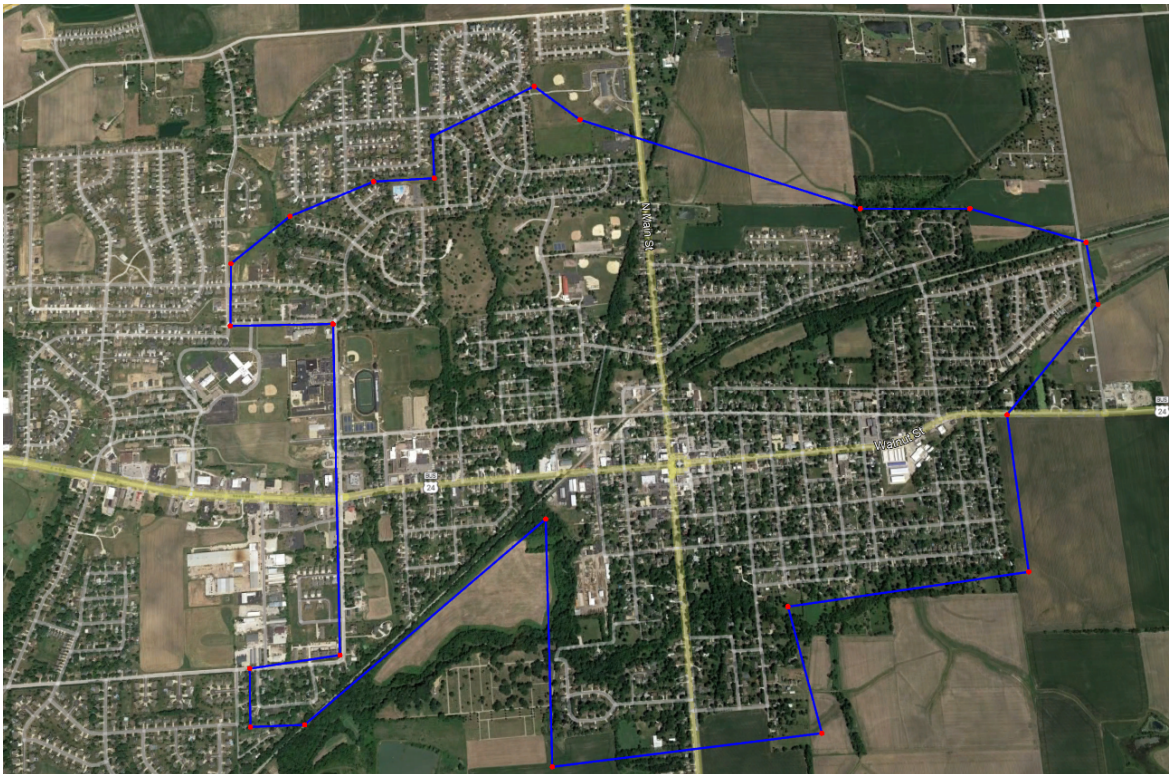
A. Examples of illegal connections are gutters/downspouts, footing tiles, basement floor drains, or sump pumps that are connected to the sanitary sewer. If they are not connected to the sanitary sewer, they are not illegal connections.

7. Who will perform the testing and when will this happen?

A. Council approved Robinson Engineering to perform the smoke testing. They have a tentative plan to perform smoke testing between June and September of 2022.

8. What area of the city is being smoke tested?

A. The Strand report presented in 2017 showed a large inflow of stormwater in the area east of Wilmor Road. The area to be smoke tested is circled in blue in the image below.



9. I or a family member has a respiratory problem. What should I do during a smoke test?

A. It would be best if you could sit outside for the duration of the smoke test, which is approximately five minutes. If you cannot sit outside, open the windows of your home and shut

your bathroom/basement doors. Also, let the smoke test crew member who knocks on your door know you have a respiratory condition.

10. I work during the day and have inside animals. What do I do during a smoke test?

A. If you leave your animals inside, make sure you leave windows open and do not lock animals in the bathroom or basement.

11. Is smoke harmful to my animals?

A. In most cases, no. But, if your animal has a respiratory condition, the smoke could irritate it.

12. Is smoke harmful to my plants?

A. No, the smoke is not harmful to indoor or outdoor plants.

13. Should I be concerned if smoke enters my home or business?

A. Yes, this means that you may have an illegal connection and sewer gases or odors can also enter your home or business. The City's Municipal Code requires that illegal connections be detached from the sanitary sewer. The owner shall have the following periods to correct any violation:

(A) If a sump pump is hooked into the sanitary sewer, it shall be unhooked within one (1) month of such notice.

(B) If a perimeter tile (or more than one) is hooked into the sanitary sewer, then all such tiles shall be disconnected within six (6) months of the date of such notice. If the disconnect date falls in the months of March, April, or May, the effective date shall be May 31 of the same year.

14. Who are my City Council Representatives?

Mike Brownfield - Ward 1 Alderman
309-258-3597

Lilija Stevens – Ward 1 Alderperson
309-444-2490

Brett Adams – Ward 2 Alderman
309-678-5148

Todd Yoder – Ward 2 Alderman
309-208-7042

Brian Butler – Ward 3 Alderman
309-444-4134

Dave Dingedine – Ward 3 Alderman
309-444-3545

Aaron Boyles – Ward 4 Alderman
309-472-5764

John Blundy – Ward 4 Alderman
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