

What are the benefits of smoke testing?

Smoke testing is a simple and fast method of testing the sewer system. The smoke is harmless and will disappear after only a few minutes. The testing is also a cost-effective way to find areas of the sewer system that need improvement.

Will rodents be smoked out?

No. However, the smoke may detect broken building sewers where there is a potential for rodent access. Owners will be notified to repair broken building sewers.

What happens if the inspection crews find a faulty sewer or lack of water traps in a home?

This information will be documented and used by the Town of Richmond Hill to identify needed repairs.

Is the smoke harmful?

No. If the smoke enters your home, it may make you cough, but the smoke is

- NON-TOXIC
- CLEAN
- HARMLESS TO HUMANS, PETS, FOOD AND MATERIAL GOODS
- CREATES NO FIRE HAZARD.

If there are individuals in your home who have respiratory problems and are immobile, please notify the Town of Richmond Hill immediately prior to testing.

What does it mean if smoke enters my house?

If smoke enters your home during the test, it may mean there are deficiencies in the plumbing that may allow potentially dangerous sewer gas to enter.

What should I do if smoke gets into the house?

- Do Not Become Alarmed
- Open windows to allow ventilation and note the location of the smoke emission; smoke will clear within a few minutes
- Contact the Smoke Testing Contractor, Murray Brousseau, D.M. Robichaud Associates Ltd. at 1-877-735-4633.

Can the smoke testing activate the smoke alarms?

Yes, smoke alarms may be activated during smoke testing. Make sure to open windows and/or doors for ventilation. If you have any doubts about the origin of the smoke, please call 911.

Can smoke plug the sewer?

There is no way smoke can plug the sewer. The smoke is made up of a vaporized substance.

For more information contact the Town of Richmond Hill, [redacted] 905-884-8013 or go to www.york.ca and refer to the Important Links Menu



York Region and Municipal



Smoke Testing



Sanitary Sewer Smoke Testing Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of smoke testing?

The purpose of smoke testing is to find potential points of inflow and infiltration in the sanitary sewer system that could lead to high flows during a storm and snow melt events.

Smoke testing can also help locate:

- Buildings that have downspout, cellar, yard or foundation drain connections to the sanitary sewer
- Sump pump discharges into a sanitary sewer
- Points of groundwater or surface water intrusion into the sanitary sewers
- Any cross connections between sanitary and storm sewers

What happens during smoke testing?

Prior to the test, the municipality will notify the local fire and police departments where they will be conducting sewer system smoke testing.

During smoke testing, field crews blow air and smoke into the sanitary sewer system and monitor where smoke escapes the system. If smoke permeates up through a yard, it indicates breaks in the sewer line.

If you have any doubt as to the source of the smoke in your home or yard, phone 911 immediately.

How Does Smoke Testing Work?

Smoke testing forces smoke-filled air through a sanitary sewer line. The smoke under pressure will fill the main line plus any connections and then follow the path of any leak to the ground surface, quickly revealing the source of the problem. Only enough force to overcome atmospheric pressure is required.

As long as openings exist for the smoke to follow, smoke tests are effective, regardless of surface type, soil type and depth of lines.

How may the smoke enter my house?

As plumbing fixtures in your home or business are connected to the sanitary sewer system, there is a potential for the smoke to enter if the drains are not connected properly. This happens particularly under the following circumstances:

- The vents connected to your buildings sewer pipes are inadequate, defective or improperly installed
- The traps under sinks, tubs, basins, showers and other drains are dry, defective or improperly installed
- The pipes, connections or seals in the wastewater drain system in and/or under your building are damaged, defective, have plugs missing or are improperly installed

How long will the testing take?

While crews might be in your area for a few hours, the actual smoke test takes approximately 15 minutes to complete for your street.

What should I do to prepare for smoke testing?

When you receive notice that smoke testing will take place, you should:

- Check to see that all drain traps under basins, washing facilities and floor drains contain water; simply flush toilets and run or pour approximately two to three cups of water into all drains, including unused fixtures and floor drains
- **If there is an individual in your home or business who has respiratory problems and/or mobility limitations, contact the Town of Richmond Hill.**

Do I have to be home during testing?

No. Inspection crews will not need to enter your home.

I am a pet owner and will not be at home during the testing. Should I be concerned?

The smoke is not harmful to pets. It would be a good idea to leave several upstairs windows partially open for ventilation in addition to turning on bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans. The smoke will dissipate in a few minutes.

How will I know when testing will occur on my street?

Door hangers will be distributed at each residence in the area approximately 48 hours prior to testing. These will provide information about the procedures, names, and phone number of personnel to contact for more information.