



CONTACT:

Todd Shoemaker, Environmental Engineer
Engineering Department
563-690-6113
tshoemak@cityofdubuque.org
www.cityofdubuque.org/engineering

NEWS RELEASE

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Dubuque Targets Inflow and Infiltration Issue

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The City of Dubuque will soon begin property inspections as part of an Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) Program to cut down on sanitary sewer overflows and sewer back-ups by eliminating storm water inflow and groundwater infiltration into the City’s sanitary sewer collector system.

Inflow is a direct connection of “clear” water (rain/storm water) into the wastewater (sanitary sewer) collection system. Infiltration is an indirect connection of “clear” water to the wastewater (sanitary sewer) system. Inflow is by far the larger problem of the two and occurs in direct proportion to rainfall. Inflow is most often the result of improperly installed sump pumps (used by many homeowners to keep groundwater out of basements), roof downspouts, and foundation drains illegally connected to the City’s sanitary sewer system. Sump pumps are also sometimes illegally connected to the sanitary sewer system via a hose leading from the sump to a laundry tub or floor drain. Infiltration occurs when groundwater seeps into sewer pipes through cracks, leaky joints or deteriorated manholes.

Excessive I&I can cause property damage and health risks as a result of sewer back-ups into basements and sanitary sewer overflows, regulatory actions/fines by state and federal agencies, and unnecessary treatment costs at the Water Pollution Control Plant. Even a single downspout or sump pump illegally connected to the City’s sanitary sewer can lead to a sewer backup in the basement of a nearby home.

The City’s sanitary sewer master plan, finalized in 2009, identified five sewersheds, or areas of the community which are the sources of high sanitary sewer flows during rainfall events. These high flows have caused sanitary sewer back-ups into basements, overflows into creeks and wetlands, and increased operational costs at the Water Pollution Control Plant. These five areas include approximately 7,000 properties. A major component of the City’s I&I program involves the mandatory inspection of these private property connections to the sanitary sewer

system. Due to the number of properties involved, and to increase the efficiency of the program, the inspections will be conducted in phases during the summers from 2011 to 2014

Beginning in early June 2011, three 2-person inspection teams from the City of Dubuque's Engineering Department will begin inspecting properties. Property owners will receive a mailing in advance with additional information that will ask them to schedule an inspection appointment. The inspectors will need to enter the yard and basement of each home to observe and record the building's drainage facilities. If an improper connection is found, the City Engineering Department will send a violation notification letter to the property owner and explain the necessary correction and timeframe for correction. A re-inspection must then be scheduled and conducted within 30 days to verify that the correction has been made.

The cooperation and timely response of property owners is needed to provide inspectors access to the properties for these inspections. All inspection team members will clearly display identification as City of Dubuque employees, travel in vehicles with a City of Dubuque label, and wear attire bearing a City of Dubuque logo. A typical inspection is completed in less than 15 minutes. There must be an adult (age 18 or over) present at the property during the inspection. Inspectors will review the following:

1. Exterior Grading: Does exterior grading slope toward the building or away from it?
2. Roof Drains: Are there roof drain downspouts that go into the ground? If so, where do they drain?
3. Seepage Collection System (foundation drain): Is there a seepage collection system? If present, does it discharge into a sump pit (proper) or the floor drain (improper)?
4. Sump Pit/Sump Pump: If present, does it discharge outside the basement through rigid pipe (proper), discharge to the floor drain (improper), or discharge to either location through a flexible hose (improper)?

Residents who believe their property may not be in compliance are encouraged to make the necessary changes before their property is inspected. Detailed information on correct connections and practices is available online at www.cityofdubuque.org/i&i and by calling the City of Dubuque Engineering Department at 563-690-6113.

Dubuque's I&I program is part of an agreement with United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Other actions being taken by the City to address I&I include: sanitary sewer capacity upgrades, inspection of manholes and sewer lines to identify inflow and infiltration sources, rehabilitation and reconstruction of manholes and sewer lines prone to infiltration.

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