



CONTACT:

Todd Shoemaker, Environmental Engineer
(563)690-6034

tshoemak@cityofdubuque.org

www.cityofdubuque.org/i&i

NEWS RELEASE

Aug. 2, 2011 – For Immediate Release

City to Smoke Test Sanitary Sewer System

DUBUQUE, Iowa – A program to evaluate the City of Dubuque’s sanitary sewer system is moving into high gear. The City’s Engineering and Public Works Departments continue to inspect the sanitary sewer system for signs of excessive wear and tear, as well as for structural defects and storm water pipeline cross connections. The next phase of the program is to conduct smoke testing in selected areas. Smoke testing is most effective when performed during the times that the ground is dry, such as August and September.

The goal of Dubuque’s Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) Reduction Program is to reduce the amount of rainwater and groundwater that enters the sanitary sewer system during wet weather. Allowing these clean water connections causes sanitary sewer back-ups into basements, overflows into creeks and wetlands, and increased operating costs to process the water at the Dubuque Water Pollution Control Plant. Removing this clean water will reduce collection and treatment costs; allow the sanitary sewer system to work more effectively; allow the city to optimize the performance of the existing pipe system and treatment; and minimize sanitary sewer backups into basements.

Smoke testing of the sanitary sewer system will be conducted during August in the area bounded approximately by Asbury Road to the west, Clarke Drive to the north, Alta Vista Street to the east, and University Avenue to the south. Approximately 10 miles of sanitary sewer pipe will be tested. WHKS & Co., an East Dubuque engineering firm, will be assisting the City with the smoke testing. An inspection crew will travel throughout the neighborhood, lifting manhole lids, setting out testing equipment, and entering yards to observe and record the smoke testing. Residents and property owners in the testing area will receive a letter with additional information.

Smoke testing consists of introducing non-toxic smoke into sanitary sewer pipe sections under moderate pressure. Engineering personnel will document where the smoke is emitted and prioritize needed repairs. Since the smoke will be placed into the sewer system that is connected to homes, residents are encouraged to pour tap water into their floor drains and sinks. This small amount of water creates a seal that keeps the smoke out of the homes. Residents do not need to be present during smoke testing.

Dry traps, drains without traps, and other plumbing defects will allow the smoke to enter the dwelling connected to the sewer line that is being tested. The smoke is non-toxic, leaves no residue, and creates no fire hazard. If a resident is present and smoke enters the house or building, please report all locations to the work crews and open a window to allow the smoke to dissipate. It may also be desirable to contact a plumber if the smoke enters the house in a manner other than a dry drain trap.

For additional information, call the City of Dubuque I&I Information line at 563-690-6113 or visit www.cityofdubuque.org/i&i.

###