



Smoke Testing Information Sheet

The situation

Extensive stormwater inflow into the sewerage system at Innisfail, Tully and Mission Beach is causing problems with a significant proportion exceeding their capacity and some sewers are overflowing. Over the next few months, Council will be investigating the sewer network to identify where rainwater is entering the sewers. Besides eliminating the nuisance of overflows, removing excessive stormwater in the Council sewerage systems will reduce operating costs. The sewage (and stormwater) is pumped multiple times before it gets to our treatment plant so reducing the stormwater component saves on pumping and treatment costs. As part of our investigations we will be using smoke testing, which is an efficient, cost-effective way to locate faulty sewers and plumbing.

What is the purpose of smoke testing?

The purpose of smoke testing is to find potential points of infiltration in the sewer system that could lead to high flows during rain events. Smoke testing can also help locate the following:

- Buildings that have roof-water connections to the sewer;
- Faulty sewer connections that could allow for ground water entry;
- Faulty sewer manholes or covers that could allow stormwater entry.

How does smoke testing work?

During smoke testing, Council crews blow non-toxic, vegetable oil-based smoke into the sewers at manhole access points and monitor where the smoke escapes. The smoke will fill the sewers and leak out at possible breakage points, roof vents, relief gullies and points of stormwater connection.

Is the smoke harmful?

NO. The smoke is a mist created from non-toxic vegetable oil. It will not harm your health or leave a stain and will disappear after a couple of minutes without any odour. The vapour could potentially be a mild respiratory irritant if you were immersed in the smoke so it is best to avoid direct contact with the smoke. The noise from the smoke blower will be similar to that from a lawn mower.

Will the smoke get into my house through plumbing fixtures?

Generally not unless the water trap (the U-bend) of a plumbing fixture (sinks or toilets) is not working properly. If the smoke does come up through a fixture, it may point to a plumbing issue that you may need to attend to.

What if the Council inspection finds a problem with plumbing on private property?

The inspection may find incorrectly plumbed roof water (connected to the sewerage system), broken drainage lines or other issues that are the responsibility of the property owner. If so, the property owner will be advised in writing of any issues.

Access to properties

Council employees (with photo ID) may need to access your private property for the testing operations. If so, you will receive a notice in your letter box advising the date, time and duration of the work at least 2 days prior to the scheduled date. Testing of each section of the sewer should take about 30 minutes to complete. We ask you to secure pets during that time. If you have any concerns about access arrangements please contact the Council Officer listed on the notice.

Emergency services

Council will advise emergency services staff of the locations, dates and times of any smoke testing work.

Queries

If you have any questions about the smoke testing program, please contact the Cassowary Coast Regional Council Customer Service Section on 1300 763 903. Specific queries may then be directed to the Water Section.



Better Together