



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **HBPW Conducts “Smoke Testing” of Sanitary Sewer Lines**

September 14, 2009, HOLLAND, MI -- The Holland Board of Public Works (HBPW) will be “smoke testing” sanitary sewer lines starting on Monday, September 14, 2009. The area being tested is along 146<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 61<sup>st</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Streets. The testing should be completed within one week.

Smoke testing is a process that allows utility crews to find leaks and other problems that can contribute to sanitary sewer overflows. “Inspecting the sanitary sewer system,” said John Van Uffelen, HBPW utility services director, “is part of our continuing effort to provide a safe, economical, efficient, and environmentally sound sewer system throughout Holland.”

During the procedure, crews will blow smoke into manholes to test sections of the sanitary sewer system. If the smoke comes out of the sewer system it is an indication that sewers may be cracked, have a bad joint, or another deficiency that may cause groundwater or rain water to enter the sanitary sewer system.

A special non-toxic smoke, manufactured for this purpose is used. The smoke leaves no residuals or stains, has no odor, creates no fire hazard and has no effect on plants and animals. The smoke appears white or grey in color.

During the testing, residents may see smoke coming out of manholes, cleanouts and inlets or out of the ground. Additionally, smoke may be seen coming from building gutters or downspouts. It is normal to see smoke coming from the sewer vent stack in the roof of any home connected to the public sewer main. However, smoke should not enter any homes. If it does enter a home, it could mean a drain trap is dry or that there is a plumbing defect inside the home. The Holland BPW suggests property owners make sure that drain traps have water in them. For seldom used floor drains it is suggested that homeowners pour a gallon of water into each drain.

If residents find smoke in their home they should exit the building and look for Holland BPW crews who will be nearby conducting the tests. If residents are away and return home to find odorless smoke in their home, they should call the Holland BPW at (616) 355-1500 so that the problem can be investigated. If the smoke has an odor like something is burning, call 911 immediately.

The Holland BPW has notified customers in the area where the testing will be done.

Van Uffelen indicated that future smoke testing is anticipated to occur at other sites. Other sanitary sewer assessments performed by the HBPW include manhole inspections, lateral inspections, closed-circuit television inspections, and dye testing.

The Holland Board of Public Works is a municipally owned utility, providing electricity, fiber optics, water filtration and wastewater treatment to the City of Holland and surrounding communities. HBPW plans, designs, builds, operates, and maintains the sanitary sewer system. The sanitary sewer system is comprised of 35 sewer pumping stations, approximately 180 miles of gravity sewer lines, and 4,172 sanitary manholes. The sanitary sewer system conveys wastewater to the Holland Area Wastewater Treatment Plant, operated by the HBPW.

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