

Monday 30th April 2018

Smoke Testing of Foster Sewer System

“Where there’s smoke, there’s sewer infiltration”

South Gippsland Water has commenced smoke testing of its sewerage system in Foster in late April 2018. The testing will take a couple of months to complete and test the network which services some 785 properties in the township. For some private properties, South Gippsland Water may require access to yards and sewer manholes to complete the process and any customers affected will receive correspondence advising of dates and times. Access inside customer’s homes is **not** required.

Smoke testing is an effective way to determine sewerage in-flow and infiltration points, whether it is from groundwater, storm water, or illegal connections to South Gippsland Water’s sewerage system.

So how does smoke testing work?

Smoke is introduced into the sewer via a vapour generator. The smoke used is medical grade baby oil that has been atomised to form a dense, yet environmentally friendly mist. This mist will follow the path of the leak to the ground surface or above ground outlet, revealing the source of the infiltration, be it illegal connection or broken pipe. Illegal connections are those where storm water run-off from buildings and walkways is funnelled into the sewer system. When it rains, this water ends up in the sewerage system and eventually at a wastewater treatment plant, where it costs the community in additional pumping and greater volumes of effluent being treated.

Why is it important?

Many thousands of dollars are spent by South Gippsland Water each year in both pumping and then treating groundwater/storm water which ends up at our sewerage treatment facilities. As part of the Corporation’s on-going sewer rehabilitation program, smoke testing is a cost effective way to identify infiltration and illegal connections.

Prior to works commencing South Gippsland Water will be notifying residents with a letter, that testing will be conducted in their street. Should the general public see smoke coming from odd locations or sewer man-holes, it is a sign there is a problem. That is if smoke can exit, storm water can enter. Whilst testing is being conducted, contractors and employees from South Gippsland Water will be in the vicinity to identify the infiltration location.

Philippe du Plessis, Managing Director of South Gippsland Water said that “Smoke testing is an integral part of our on-going sewer maintenance and rehabilitation program. It is a cost effective way to identify infiltration locations and illegal connections into our sewerage system. Once testing is complete it allows the corporation to rectify faults both on private and public lands, ensuring Foster’s sewerage system operates at its optimal efficiency”.

[Image: A vapour generator connected to a sewer manhole, pumps the smokey looking vapour into the sewer.]

