

Chase That Flow



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It's been a wet year so far. Anyone concerned about the next flow certification? Perhaps you should be. How many of you have unlimited monies to spend on yet another engineering study? Hands. None. That's what I figured. So do yourself and your budget a favor and get out there.

Who knows your collection system better than you? The mayor? The board? How about the engineer? The correct answer is no one. So why wait for someone to tell you what you need to do and how to do it? You know the problem areas so get out there and DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT!

Anyone that tells you setting up flow meters to identify problem areas is the first step in an Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) study, is giving you misinformation. I don't mean to downplay the importance of flow monitoring data, but the data obtained must be meaningful. In order to have meaningful data the flow meters must be placed in the proper locations, and the only way to find the proper locations is to chase that flow.

In order to chase flows, you have to get out into the collection system after a rain event. Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to be out there in the middle of a downpour. You can if you like, but it's not necessary. Chasing flows is a systematic process that not only weeds out non-problem areas but also helps prioritize problem areas. It's fairly simple and, hey, you're getting paid anyway. All you need is a manhole hook and pencil and paper. You don't really need additional bodies unless you are working in a high traffic area. Use common sense. Don't get run over.

Start at the first interceptor manhole closest to the treatment plant. Document the condition of the manhole. Are there any visible leaks? Look around the barrel section joints and pipe entrances and exits. Don't forget the trough. Now determine the direction of the heaviest flow. Go to the next interceptor manhole in that direction. Repeat. It's that simple.

I was working with a system recently where we chased the flow. We were televising some sewer main when a nice little 1.3 inch rainfall occurred. The flow jumped so that televising was impossible. We chased the flow instead. We followed the flow, popping manholes, until, low and behold, we lost it! We now had an area

isolated for further investigation. It took about an hour to isolate that section of main.

By chasing the flow, you break down problem areas into more workable sections. Further investigation of these smaller areas, via smoke testing, televising and yes, flow monitoring, will now yield more meaningful data. I will discuss the next steps in I&I investigations next quarter. Until then, CHASE THAT FLOW! 💧