

# Let's Pick Up From Where We Left Off

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**O**K. So let's pick up from where we left off, shall we? Hopefully you've done some flow chasing and now have a better idea where your flow is coming from. The next step, in my opinion, is smoke testing. Smoke testing is an easy and inexpensive way to locate problems. And it's not as bad as some people make it out to be. Sure you may fill some basements with smoke, but with proper notification, and a little PR, the residents aren't very upset.

First step is the smoke testing packet I send you months prior to the actual event. It contains all the information you need to properly plan, notify and conduct the smoke test. There is also a release form that must be signed by the mayor or supervisor. A motion has to be made at a board meeting requesting New York Rural Water's assistance in smoke testing. This would be a good time to start your PR campaign. The packet also includes an article on the benefits of smoke testing. This is a very useful tool when trying to sell the test to the board and residents. The article details the reasons for smoke testing, how to properly notify the residents, how the procedure works and how to document the findings. I am also available to make a brief presentation to the board. Just call me. Also included is the MSDS for the smoke, manhole inspection form, smoke test data form and a fact sheet on the impact of sump pump flows (makes a great bill stuffer). All that's left to do now is set the date. Depending on your area, my smoke test season runs from April to mid November.

About a week prior to the smoke test, send out the public notifications. The day before, notify emergency services, and again, on the morning of the test. Now the fun begins. We start by isolating a section of main, setting the smoker somewhere in the middle of that section, and blow smoke. Walk around each house on the isolated section, looking up as well as down. Don't be in a rush. Sometimes it takes a while for the smoke to surface. Check all storm sewer catch basins for evidence of smoke. It's that easy kids. Now if someone comes out upset because their basement is filled with smoke, politely explain to them that if smoke can enter their house, so can sewer gasses, which are toxic and explosive. They may just invite you in to locate the source, offer you coffee and dinner on Sunday. That's the PR working. Take pictures of all violations, as well as, a written log.

Now, I know some of you are anxious to know about the flow meters. After you have chased the flow and located some problem areas, if you really want to, you can set them up. Don't, however, set them up if we are going to be smoke testing there very soon. We don't want to taint the information they are collecting. Set them up in the Fall to get some wet weather flows and remove them just before smoke testing. Remember, use flow meters to quantify, not identify!

Give me a call at (518) 828-3155 ext. 18, if you have any questions or would like to schedule a smoke test. Call early, right after the first of the year. I have a feeling I'm going to be busy next summer. Next time we meet, dirty movies! 💧