

## Metropolitan District Commission Building Inspection Program

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### ***What is the Building Inspection Program for?***

Every time it rains, the District's sewers overflow from too much water. The MDC is trying to identify extraneous flows (inflow and infiltration) in the sewer system, which includes rainwater from catch basins, sump pumps, area drains and roof drains, along with groundwater that gets into the sewer through cracks in sewer pipes. This proposed inspection program will identify the extent of these sources on private property.

#### ***What is inflow and infiltration?***

Inflow and infiltration are terms used to describe the ways extraneous fresh water (groundwater and storm water) enter the sanitary sewer system. Infiltration occurs when groundwater seeps into the sewer pipes through cracks, leaky joints, or deteriorated manholes. Inflow occurs when water is directed from concentrated sources (sump pumps or downspout drains) into the sanitary sewer.

#### ***Why is this extraneous water a problem?***

Fresh water entering the sanitary sewer system creates two main problems:

**First**, it consumes sewer system capacity. It is estimated that for every inch of rainfall the average house roof sheds about 623 gallons of water. An 8-inch sanitary sewer can handle domestic wastewater flow from up to 200 homes, but only 8 sump pumps, operating at full capacity, or six homes with downspouts connected to the sewer, will overload this same 8-inch line. If extraneous freshwater is directed into the sanitary sewer the capacity is overwhelmed, sewers back-up into houses, and the system will eventually overflow releasing raw sewage into the environment. This creates health and safety issues that could have significant costs associated with it.

**Secondly**, extraneous fresh water that reaches the wastewater treatment plant requires treatment. The size and cost of treatment is increased, it increases wear-and-tear of the equipment, and reduces equipment life span. The added cost of equipment upgrades and operations is then passed onto each customer.

#### ***What is a sump pump?***

A sump pump is a mechanical device that typically is located in the basement to control groundwater and to minimize water from accumulating in a basement. Sump pumps are usually in a "sub-floor" pit from which water is drawn, and pumped out of the building. A sump pump can also be connected to the roof drains to control the discharge of rainwater collected on the roof away from the building.

***Doesn't rainwater get into the sewer through catch basins in the street anyway? What is the difference between storm drain and sanitary sewer?***

No, it does not. There are two separate systems to convey wastewater and storm water. Catch basins collect storm water from rainfall and snow melt, and then discharge it to local streams and rivers. Sanitary sewers collect wastewater and transport it to the wastewater treatment facility where it is treated. Rainwater and groundwater are nominally clean water and do not need to be treated at the wastewater treatment facility.

***Do I have to let you in to perform an inspection?***

Your participation is strictly voluntary and you do not have to let us in. However, your participation can greatly assist yourself, your neighbors and the MDC. It will allow us to resolve basement backups that may be accruing within your neighborhood. It will reduce the release of raw sewage into our local streams and the Connecticut River, reduce the costs to construct new sewers, treatment plants, pump stations, and reduce treatment costs. It will also provide additional capacity in our sanitary sewers for growth and development.

***Is this a plumbing/building inspection?***

No, it is not. The MDC and its inspectors are only trying to locate sources that contribute rainwater and/or groundwater to the sanitary sewer system and will not inspect homes for plumbing and/or building code violations.

***Who is performing the building inspections?***

The building inspections will be performed by personnel from the District's specialized consultant, Flow Assessment Services LLC and their subcontractors, Crew Two and Stacy Depasquale Engineering Inc. (SDE). All firms have been doing this type of work for many years and for many communities throughout New England. All personnel are qualified, have undergone background checks and will carry photo IDs with them that they will display.

***What if my child/children are home by themselves? Will you still ask permission to conduct the inspection?***

If an adult over the age of 18 is not present, our inspection team will not enter the home nor ask permission to conduct the investigation. We will leave behind a "Sorry We Missed You" slip with hopes to conduct the inspection at a later date.

***How long does the inspection take?***

The building inspection should take approximately 10-15 minutes.

***What happens if I'm not home? Do I need to schedule an appointment?***

If you are not home, the field engineers will leave behind a "Sorry We Missed You" slip with hopes to conduct the inspection at a later date. You do not need to call to make an appointment for this inspection as the field engineers will make three attempts to complete this building inspection.

***Can I get information and/or results from the building inspection?***

Information or results from the building inspection can be obtained from the MDC, by contacting our 24-hour Clean Water Project Information Line at (860)-251-6942.

***What will happen if the inspection finds an inflow source such as sump pumps or rain leaders?***

This information will be noted by the inspector and will be used in an overall evaluation of the amount of clean water that enters the sanitary sewer system. This information will help assist the MDC to select and design the most cost-effective solution to mitigate the problem associated with inflow (basement backups and sanitary sewer overflows). These solutions will be selected in coordination with your town; subject to regulatory approval.

***What solutions are being considered?***

Once the District has completed the building inspections and evaluated the impact of private inflow on the sanitary sewers, the District will begin evaluating solutions to reduce their impact. Solutions could include building new sewers, pump stations, and treatment capacity to handle the additional water. Solutions could also include removal of the inflow sources including redirecting them to on-site disposal and discharge to local storm drains. Some on-site solutions may involve financial assistance from the District, changing the current policies and ordinances regarding the discharge of inflow, or assessing surcharges for discharging extraneous water to the sanitary sewers. All solutions will be evaluated and coordinated with your town to select the most beneficial and cost-effective solution to improve the sanitary sewer system. All solutions will be subject to regulatory approval.

***What is the current MDC policies regarding private inflow sources such as sump pumps and rain leaders?***

MDC policies prohibit the discharge of groundwater or storm water into the sanitary sewer system. The MDC, with cooperation of the member towns, will review these policies in light of the results from the building inspections. The policies will be modified if necessary to support solutions selected by the MDC, which will be subject to federal and state regulatory review.

The following policies are found in the District's Sewer Use Ordinances:

Section S2a of the District's Ordinances relating to sewers prohibits discharges of anything into the sewer other than for what the sewer was intended. In other words, sanitary sewers are to be used to convey only sanitary sewage to our treatment facilities; storm sewers are to be used to carry storm water.

Section S2L of the District's Ordinances specifically states that sanitary sewers are not to be used to receive and convey storm or surface water, roofs or roof conductors, yard drains, subsoil drainage, among other sources.

Section S5c give the MDC the authority to disconnect a drain that is "wrongfully used or connected or through which improper wastes are discharged into the public sewer system." The District has the authority to take action to protect the public health and safety, which these connections can comprise. The District interprets this provision to allow removal of any extraneous water flow from the sanitary sewer system.

***Are there any fines or penalties if an inflow source is located?***

Currently, the MDC does not have a specific fine or penalty, but does prohibit the discharge of non-sewage type flows to the sanitary sewers. The MDC will evaluate many different solutions to reducing the impact of inflow on the sanitary sewers, including revisions of current MDC policies related to the discharge of inflow from private property.

***Why should I disconnect my sump pump?***

Disconnecting your sump pump will help to reduce extraneous flow in the sanitary sewer system and help protect your basement and your neighbor's basement from backups during rain storms. In addition, according to the MDC's sewer use ordinance, discharge of non-sanitary flows to the sanitary sewer system is not permitted.

***How much will this cost me?***

The inspection costs you nothing.. If you, as the homeowner, decide to remove or redirect inflow sources such as sump pumps, capping clean outs, floor drains, and the disconnection of roof leaders; the MDC's Private Property Inflow Disconnect Program may reimburse homeowners up to \$500 for labor and/or materials necessary to remove the inflow source.

***Is it difficult to remove or redirect inflow sources?***

The removal or redirection of an inflow source is fairly simple and straight forward and can be done by the homeowner or a licensed plumber.

***Who do I call about options to remove my inflow source and information about reimbursement from the MDC?***

Upon receipt of your phone call, an MDC representative will inspect your property and provide you with different methods of removing the inflow sources. They will also provide information about possible reimbursement under the MDC Private Property Inflow Disconnect Program. This program will reimburse homeowners up to \$500 for labor and/or materials necessary to remove the inflow source. Please ask the field engineers performing the building inspection for more information about this program.

***What if I have other questions about the building inspections?***

If you have other questions regarding the building inspection program or any other aspect of the Clean Water Project, please contact us at our 24-hour Clean Water Project Information Line at (860)-251-6942.

The MDC thanks you for your time, patience and cooperation and we look forward to working with you on the Clean Water Project.