



## DON'T DELAY INSPECT TODAY!

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Inspecting your village main lines above ground is one thing, but to really get to the core of the problem we need to delve into the main lines and manholes below the surface. Some find it very easy to assume everything is going OK because there is wastewater coming into our plant from our collection system and that's how it's supposed to work. However, when we spot particular places in our communities that seem a little bit odd or off, we as operation specialists should be acting in a manner that pursues investigation into the odd findings of a sink hole or a sidewalk block that has suddenly become a major trip hazard. Maybe there are extra green patches of lush grass growing better than the rest of the surrounding area or faint smells of sewer odor or waste pooling in someone's yard. All of these and more are indicators of an issue within our collection systems. What seems like a small issue or an anomaly at the time is all too often passed off as it being just that, but as operation specialists we need to be investigating these issues immediately. This is important because early and accurate prevention matters. Collection lines are often written off as, "it is what it is", but they are really just as important as the roof at the sewer plant or the arms of a clarifier.

Investigation starts with identifying where your lines actually are underground. I know this may seem simple to some, however, a lot of rural and small systems have very old and outdated maps that don't pinpoint everything, let alone any updates or changes made to the collection system. Once identified, you need to start opening manholes. Manholes are a great indicator of issues within our lines. Quite often with breaks you will see stones, pieces of clay tile, cement pieces or if the problem is already a major issue then you may already have a full blockage due to a collapsed line. In some cases you may not see any debris which can be just fine, but in other cases your manhole may be as clean as a whistle which can be an indicator of major inflow and infiltration. However, investigating does **not** stop at the manhole. Preparation involves cleaning the line the best you can with your sewer jetter or vac truck to allow for easy, clean and visual access to the line. Once cleaned, we can place the camera in the line and begin recording. Your video inspection may identify one bad connection letting some minor I&I **OR** it may identify what you thought was a common place for a blockage of rags and grease and the video may clearly be showing a collapsed line. Addressing these problems are very different from one another cost wise and

impact wise to our system and our communities, but verifying them with certainty leads to a direct plan. Upon discovery you may need to set aside a few days for digging and repair or you may need to uncover a manhole that's been undiscoverable for 50 years. Either way, prioritizing your findings is crucial to tackling any of the issues you may find. Maybe your system needs to set up a better cleaning schedule or maybe you're able to identify who's lateral is allowing all the grease into the system, maybe you've found a place where rodents are invading, or maybe that particular section of line is just fine. For our small and rural systems, these inspections shine a light on what some have never seen within their collection systems and help coordinate a plan for future or immediate action.

As your collection system ages, you should be taking notice of even the small issues above ground with a thorough and proper investigation. Left unchecked it will surely create a much bigger problem in the future. A problem that is likely more costly than identifying it early and creating an actual proactive action plan to remedy the situation. These video inspections are miraculous at providing documented factual evidence of many issues to present to your board and community members. I can honestly say I have not assisted with one video inspection that has not produced valuable and documented information to benefit the respective systems. We **need** to be looking inside our lines. I cannot express how important video inspections are amongst the tools that are available for systems. At NYRWA, I feel sewer camera inspections are of one of our greatest services. The ability to see inside your main lines and determine the cause of the issue saves time, money, and assumptions. If you have not had the opportunity to have your system documented via sewer camera then you should be contacting your surrounding plants for shared services, contractors who provide the service, or NYRWA to try and schedule some time with this great technology. 💧💧

