

Be Aware!

By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Tech

This time of year we are all especially energy cost conscious when it comes to sealing up our homes and buildings airtight to reduce the loss of heating \$'s. It's at this time with little air exchange when ambient air quality can significantly deteriorate.

Please reevaluate whether you have the proper number of air quality warning detectors in your homes and public buildings and that the batteries have been changed.

In the last few months I have received several calls regarding apparent sewer gas problems in public buildings. You always go through the checklist of suggestions, such as, dry floor drains and plugged vent pipes. In one instance it was determined that a natural gas leak in the alley had followed the path of least resistance along a recent horizontal bore line into an interior electric panel in a business. In another location it was determined that sewer gas was entering a school building through a dry floor drain and a faulty wax ring. In yet another location, access to a community building had been restricted because the air quality was so bad. I can personally verify that after exposure of an hour or less your throat was sore and you had a headache that persisted for a few hours. In this case the source was a leaking PVC pipe joint behind the wall of a restroom. Thankfully no one lost their lives or had permanent health damage.

If the sewer line entering a building has an interior leak it is a perfect conduit for any volatile poisonous gases that exist in that sewer collection system to enter your building. That includes those contaminants in the soil adjacent to that collection system. They can enter through faulty joints in clay tile lines. Also remember that PVC lines are not a barrier to petroleum such as underground fuel leaks. This is why many times those searching for the extent of underground contaminations (plumes) want to know the location of adjacent sewer lines. I personally know of several explosions resulting from underground propane leaks.

Thanks to the generosity of the Village of Platte Center and the efforts of the operator/design engineer, Kevin Jarecki, the NeRWA sewer smoker has an attachment that facilitates smoking sewer service lines into buildings through the outside cleanout. It has been tried and successfully tested. It is pictured here.

