Series: 2014 Number: 1

Date: April 25, 2014

Applicable Department: Engineering Operations, Sewer Branch

Information also provided to Fire & Rescue Services

*Crew Talks provide instruction on matters relating to Occupational Health and Safety.*

**Call Before You Clear**

***Background***

Watch this link to a “you tube” news video on this topic in the United States:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_dUMLSLYtw&feature=email>

**Stay safe. Don’t risk hitting a natural gas line inside a sewer line. Call Before You Clear.**

It’s important that you know what’s inside the pipe before using equipment to clear it. Some natural gas lines were installed in a way that may have caused the gas line to cross through a sewer service line. Also called cross bores, these intersecting lines can go undetected until clearing a blocked sewer service line damages the natural gas line.

If rotating equipment or water jets rupture the cross bore, a natural gas leak could result. That’s why it’s vitally important to find out if natural gas lines may be intersecting the sewer line before beginning work to clear a blocked sewer.

**Examples of a cross bore**

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| **​http://www.fortisbc.com/NaturalGas/GasSafety/PublishingImages/12-054.2_Crossbore_image_02.jpg** | **http://www.fortisbc.com/NaturalGas/GasSafety/PublishingImages/12-054.2_Crossbore_image_01.jpg** |

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**Why would FortisBC not have known the natural gas pipe intersected the sewer pipe?**

Many utilities use underground “horizontal directional digging” to install natural gas pipes underground beneath streets, driveways, and mature trees to minimize damage. This approach is commonly used in the industry because it involves significantly less environmental impacts and disruption than open trench digging. However, because many vintage sewer lines are made of clay and contain no tracer wire they are not “locatable” (where they can be identified with above ground locating devices) and a utility may have come in contact with it without knowing.

Further information can be found on FortisBC’s website and <http://callbeforeyouclear.com/>

**Call Before You Clear**

***Direction***

Use and record the following information on the **Sewer Branch’s Sewer Blockage Removal report** form.

To protect yourself, co-workers, and the public, follow these steps when you receive a call regarding a backed up sewer and before anyone attempts to clear the sewer pipe.

1. Call **(604) 257-1940** (Call Before You Clear).
2. Inform the agent you are calling about a “**sewer service line blockage.**”
3. Provide the agent with your name and the Sewer Branch’s **ID number 10308.**
4. Provide the agent with **your cell phone number** so they can contact you directly.
5. Provide them with the location (i.e. address of the house) of the blocked sewer service or sewer main.
6. Answer any other questions and provide as much information as possible to the agent.
7. The agent will provide you with a ticket number.

Record the ticket number on the form.

1. Record the time you called the agent on the form.

Once off the phone with the agent, wait for FortisBC to call you. The agent will notify FortisBC immediately and FortisBC will make every effort to respond in two hours or less to locate gas lines. They treat the call as an emergency. It’s a free service available 24 hours a day.

When FortisBC calls you, they may ask for further details and information. They will examine their records to determine if any potential conflicts exist between their natural gas pipes and whether an in-sewer camera inspection may be needed. They will inform you a crew has been sent out to perform an inspection and locate. The FortisBC crew should be on site within an hour of the call. FortisBC works with professionally trained sewer camera contractors who can be sent to your location to complete an inspection. The contractor uses a special camera that goes inside the sewer pipe to identify any conflicts or “cross bores” with underground natural gas lines.

Once the FortisBC crew has performed the inspection, locate and assessed the situation, they will provide you with instructions on when you can proceed with the work (i.e. to clear the line).

1. Record the time FortisBC arrived on site

*Note: Do not begin clearing the sewer until FortisBC has performed the inspection, locate, assessed the situation and provided you with an ok to proceed with the work.*