We have been inspecting our sewer pipes throughout the township. Perhaps you have seen our employees performing this task and wondered what they were doing. We are looking (and filming) the flow through our wastewater pipes in order to determine where any problem (or potential problem) exists along the sewer line. We have mentioned in a previous quarter the importance of reducing inflow and infiltration (I&I). Inflow is stormwater that enters into the sewer system. This infiltration can occur along footing/foundation drains, roof drains, downspouts, drains from window wells, outdoor basement stairwells, drains from driveways, and groundwater/basement sump pumps to name a few sources.

Snow melt or a rain event can potentially start filling the sewer systems with “clear” water, eventually filling the system to capacity. If the system reaches capacity or becomes overloaded, wastewater flows at a much higher level than normal and if sanitary fixtures or drains are below this overload level, water will flow backward through the sewer pipe, flooding basements or households and causing manholes to pop open releasing wastewater onto the street.

I&I costs treatment facilities and consumers large amounts of money in operating expenses. All water entering the facility must be treated as wastewater causing an increase in operating costs proportional to the amount of “clear” water entering the system. This cost eventually gets passed back to the consumer in the form of rate increases. By reducing I&I and operating costs, we can minimize the unnecessary treatment of “clear” water as well as extend the life of the wastewater transportation system. The pumps that are involved with treatment and transport operate 24 hours a day 7 days a week. However, they work much harder if the load increases.