



# Eliminating Interior Odors

**Interior odors can be difficult to identify and correct. Taking a systematic approach can help solve interior odor issues.**

Interior odors can be caused by a building's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system air intake pulling "sour" air from a roof vent, or by a breach in the building's sewer ventilation system.

## HVAC SYSTEM

If the odor appears when the HVAC system runs or is limited to a specific HVAC zone, the odor may be related to the HVAC system. Roof vents located near an HVAC air intake may need to be relocated. Installing activated charcoal filters on the roof vents may also help to prevent odors from entering the HVAC system.

## SEWER VENTILATION SYSTEM

If the odor is not related to the HVAC system, it may be caused by a breach in the sewer ventilation system. Plumbing fixtures are designed with a water barrier that isolates the sewer from the building. The breach could be something as simple as a dry P-trap to something as complex as a cracked ventilation pipe.

A P-trap is the curved, "U" section of drain pipe that holds water, forming a seal, to prevent sewer gases from entering a building. Drains that are rarely used may have a dry P-trap. When a P-trap dries out, odors can escape. To establish the water seal, pour water and a capful of vegetable oil into the drain.



## CONSULT A LICENSED PLUMBER

If odors persist, it is time to consult a licensed plumber. Get estimates from several licensed plumbing companies and select one who has experience with identifying and correcting odor issues, including roof vent inspection and smoke testing.

## SMOKE TEST

The most effective way to identify a problem with the sewer ventilation system is to perform a smoke test. A licensed plumber will cap the roof vents and pressurize the system with non-toxic smoke. Smoke will escape from openings in the plumbing system. Where smoke appears, there is a potential problem that needs to be addressed. For a business, the smoke test should be performed after hours so customers inside the building do not become alarmed. Once the smoke test has been completed, discuss the results with the plumber to find out what problems were identified and the best solution to eliminate them. Be sure to get estimates for any repairs prior to having the repair made.

***To report an odor complaint, use Contact Henderson at [cityofhenderson.com](http://cityofhenderson.com)***

**Department of Utility Services  
(702) 267-2603**

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