

The Eagle has landed

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sew·er sō·ci·ol·ō·gy, the science of society, social institutions, and social relationships viewed through the eyes of a sewer; specifically, the systematic study of the development, structure, interaction, and collective sewer use of organized groups of human beings.

Most sewer flows are characterized by repeatable diurnal patterns that vary across weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Differences in land use also are apparent, and distractions and disruptions of daily life often can be observed.

This month, we use our knowledge of sewer sociology to estimate what sewer use might have looked like during the most historic event of the 20th century.

“One small step for Man ... one giant leap for mankind.” Spoken by Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969, as he set foot on the Moon, these immortal words were broadcast to a worldwide audience. In the U.S. alone, an estimated 125 million people watched history unfold on live television.

We wondered what effect such an event



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would have on residential sewer use, but with no surviving sewer use data, we were left to speculate.

Composite hydrographs of sewer use from a residential area in the Eastern time zone are estimated in the figure. Weekdays are shown in green, and weekends are shown in blue. Sunday, July 20, 1969, and Monday, July 21, 1969, are shown in red in figures a and b, respectively. These lines represent our expert opinion of the effect of the Apollo 11 landing on residential sewer use.

What do you think sewer use looked like on this historic day? We would love to hear from you, and we hope that – just maybe – somebody somewhere has some sewer use data from this day that they would be willing to share.

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Estimated residential sewer use during Apollo 11 landing

