Sewer sociologists conclude world did not end

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sew'er so-ci-ol'o-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.

his month, we take a look at doomsday predictions through the eyes of a sewer.

A number of doomsday predictions have been made over the years by a variety of folks; Oct. 21, 2011, was the most recent example. So, did the world really come to an end? To answer this question, we decided to put sewer sociology to the test and take a definitive look.

Figure (a) shows a composite hydrograph of sewer use in a residential area in Southern California. Weekdays (Mondays through Thursdays) are shown in green. Fridays are shown in light green. Saturdays are shown in light blue, and Sundays are shown in darker blue. Sewer use on Friday, Oct. 21, is shown in red.

The diurnal patterns observed in the sewers beneath our feet provide a glimpse into the life of the community above.

Life-threatening events – floods, fires, earthquakes, and other natural disasters – can be observed as departures from these patterns.

Because the data from Oct. 21 show no discernible disruption in sewer use, we find no evidence to support the occurrence of a doomsday event. Couple this observation with the fact that normal sewer use has been observed on subsequent days, and we can conclude with some confidence that the



world did not end.

During an actual doomsday event, in which the entire population would be wiped out, we envision that a sewer use departure, such as the one shown in Figure (b), would be more likely to occur.

The next doomsday prediction is for Dec. 21, 2012, but rest assured, two sewer sociologists are on the case. If the world

comes to an end, you can count on us to let you know.

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Sewer use patterns for various end-of-world scenarios

