



SEWER SYSTEM BEARS THE COST OF FLUSHED WIPES

The desire for greater convenience in our lives has made nonwoven wipes a multi-billion dollar industry. Wipes are available for just about any bathroom cleaning task – wiping, removing the makeup, washing the counter or cleaning the floor. The industry continues to grow and so do the problems in our sewer system as more wipes are flushed down the toilet.



Customer Outreach

Communities throughout the country are becoming increasingly frustrated as wipes create havoc in their sewer pipes, pump and lift stations and wastewater treatment facilities. This equipment was not designed to handle wipes and maintenance costs are rising due to increased labor to remove them.

The very characteristic that makes wipes so attractive from a cleaning standpoint – wet strength – makes them a nightmare to clean up in the sewer system. Most of these wipes do not break apart in water. “Flushable” does not mean it is safe for the sewer system. Wipes retain their strength, attach to other wipes and catch on equipment in ropey chains. Wipes also form clumps that grow into hard masses creating blockages and damaging equipment. Sewers need to be cleaned with high pressure water jet equipment to break apart these obstructions, and pumps have to be pulled so messy clumps can be detangled and cut away.

Southeast Michigan communities are waging their own battles with wipes clogging critical sewer system facilities and increasing maintenance requirements. Our staff is committed to cleaning and maintaining our pump stations and sewers. Removing wipes is a priority task that must be completed on a regular basis to keep our sewer system operating smoothly.

Wastewater collected from our community is transported to the Great Lakes Water Authority's (GLWA) Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) in Detroit that treats sewage from 77 communities. There are hundreds of pieces of equipment where wipes can accumulate. The cleaning time needed to address this issue has increased significantly translating into greater operating expenses.



Nonwoven wipes clog sewers and equipment in pump stations and wastewater treatment plants because they don't break apart in water. The extra maintenance required to remove them comes at a cost to all sewer system users.

Never Flush

- Personal and baby wipes
- Tampons and sanitary products
- Condoms
- Facial tissues
- Paper towels
- Cleaning wipes and rags
- Dental floss
- Cotton balls and swabs
- Cat litter
- Prescription drugs
- Over-the-counter medicines
- Cigarette butts



Wipes and other items also cause problems in the pipes inside your home. Clogged pipes can lead to overflowing toilets, basement sewer backups and the need to clean out the main drain. When this happens, a plumber is needed to clear the blockage. To help avoid these problems and expenses, only flush human waste and toilet paper.

Before reaching its ultimate destination of GLWA's WRRF in Detroit, sewage flows through a network of pipes that are operated by different entities.

Homes

Residents are responsible for pipes inside homes and service leads where sewage transport begins.

Community Sewers

Sewage is transported through community sewers to a large interceptor sewer at our community boundary.

County or GLWA Interceptors

Interceptors, operated by the County or GLWA, transport sewage to a final set of interceptors that connect to the WRRF.

WRRF

Sewage is treated and effluent is discharged to the Detroit and Rouge Rivers.

Take your responsibility seriously. Don't flush wipes or other items that can clog pipes in your home, the sewer system, pump stations and equipment at the WRRF.



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