

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SEWER OVERFLOWS!

Did you know that sewer overflows are usually the result of inappropriate materials flowing into the sewer system?

Sewer backups and overflows are frequently caused by improper materials entering the sewer system.

When grease from meat fats, lard, oil, shortening, butter/margarine, food scraps, baking goods, sauces, and dairy products are washed down sinks, grease sticks to the insides of sewer pipes (in both private property pipes and public sewer pipes).

Over time, the grease can build up and block the entire pipe. The buildup of fats, oils, and grease in the sewer system causes sewer blockages, which eventually result in sewer backups that can overflow into streets and into homes, damaging property and the environment.

Home garbage disposals do not keep grease out of the plumbing system. Detergent products, intended to dissolve grease, may pass it down the line and cause problems elsewhere.



Approximately 80% of grease-related sewer blockages and overflows originate in residential areas. The results can be: *Raw sewage overflowing into your home or your neighbor's home; an expensive and unpleasant cleanup that often must be paid for by the home or business owner; raw sewage overflowing into public places, yards, streets, and drains; potential environmental impacts to Lake Pontchartrain and surrounding public waterways; and an increase in operation and maintenance costs for the Department of Sewerage.*

All households play an important role in preventing neighborhood sewer system blockages.

How can you help?

*Refrain from pouring fats, oils, and grease down sinks or garbage disposals. They are not designed to properly handle these materials.*

*Before washing, scrape and dry-wipe pots, pans, and dishes with paper towels and dispose of the materials in the trash.*

*Pour fats, oils, and grease into a container such as an empty jar or coffee can. Once the materials have cooled and solidified, secure the lid, and dispose of the container in the trash.*

*Use sink strainers to catch food items, then empty the strainer into the trash.*

To help prevent sewer backups, the following items should not be disposed of in the sanitary sewer system:

*Diapers, wipes, cooking grease, paper towels, food (do not use the food disposal for all food items), feminine hygiene products, contraceptives, etc.*

These items should be disposed of in your trash can, NOT in the sanitary sewer system. Improper disposal of these items can cause potential sewer backups within your residence and problems in the Parish's sewer system.

Most basic homeowner's insurance policies do not cover sewer or drain backups. In most cases, additional coverage needs to be added to the policy to protect homeowners from backups.

Property owners are responsible for the maintenance, repair, and cleaning of the sewer line from the house up to and including the sewer clean-out.

## FLUSHABLE WIPES NOT SO FLUSHABLE

Wipes are causing serious issues for wastewater treatment system operators all over the country, including our sewer system in Jefferson Parish.

Many of the wipes entering the sewer system are not dispersible and technically not flushable.

The term "flushable wipes" was coined in the 1980s when

latex bonded wet wipes with polyester fibers were brought onto the market.

The wipe was considered "flushable" since it could transit through the toilet, but with all of the polyester fibers it was not dispersible.

The definition of what is flushable is not subject to industry guidelines or consumer instructions. With the rapid increase of wipes on the market, there is significant consumer confusion about what is and is not flushable.

For example, baby wipes, household wipes, and feminine hygiene wipes are not flushable.

As sewers around the world turn into solid waste conveyance systems, we all have to work harder to keep sewerage flowing.

De-ragging of pumps, valves, and other equipment is adding maintenance and higher energy costs for sewer agencies around the world.

Mitigation measures include: *public education, better technology, and new regulations.*

The most important mitigation aspect is public education. Consumers need to know what to flush, and more importantly, what not to flush.

### PLEASE DO NOT FLUSH ANY WIPES.

*The wipes are not dispersing, and are making their way through the sewer system to the pumps/motors of sewer lift stations, causing pump failures, blockages, back-ups, and/or sewer overflows.*

For more information, contact the Jefferson Parish Department of Sewerage at (504) 736-6661 or (504) 736-6006 evenings, weekends, and holidays.

