



Wipes: Why They're in Your System (and How to Get Them Out)

May 17, 2015
8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Pacific II
Hilton Long Beach
Long Beach, CA

Instructor: Aubrey Strause, Verdant Water, PLLC

AGENDA

7:30 – 4:00 Registration
7:30 – 9:00 Continental Breakfast

Course Description:

Having problems with wipes clogging up your collection system and treatment plant? Want to learn how to identify what products are causing the problems? You might be surprised that it's not just wipes that are called "flushable"! This course will help you understand the phenomenon of nondispersible consumer products and what you can do to reduce the problem. The course is interactive, including an exercise in which all participants evaluate different wipe products (fresh from the package, of course!) – some labeled as flushable, some not – and compare observations about each. Volunteers from the audience will also test at least four different kinds of wipes and toilet paper in a six-position Phipps-Bird reactor, updating other participants after breaks on how "their" product is breaking down (or not!). Topics covered will include:

- What wipes are made of- the answer will boggle your mind.
- What's behind the Federal Trade Commission's November 2, 2015 press release – a Final Consent Order against one of the largest manufacturers of "flushable" wipes, requiring the removal of many products from major U.S. retailers.
- Some surprising downstream effects of inline sewage grinders and grinder pumps, and how not understanding these can cost your utility more money than you were spending.
- The top reason people are willing to change their behavior about flushing wipes- and it may not be what you expect.
- What marketing and labeling requirements apply to wipes? How it varies by type, and why some of it is intentionally misleading.
- Current data on the sale of wipes- "flushable" and other- and projections for future sales;
- Pros and cons of different types of outreach messages on the topic of wipes, with case studies from around the country.
- Why the problem is so bad lately, and how wipes manufacturers try to "spin" data when talking about the increased publicity.

- Progress between two parallel projects of the wipes manufacturers and representatives from the water quality groups:
 - 1) Developing the 4th Edition of Flushability Guidelines and
 - 2) Creating an International Standards Organization (ISO) standard for “flushable”.
- How using the wrong terminology to describe what we’re seeing can really sabotage the good work of water quality professionals.
- Locations in your system that may be flushing culprits – it might not be who you think it is.
- Fantastic R&D from wipes manufacturers, showing a substrate that breaks down as fast as toilet paper.
- How to track wipes to their source and improve your enforcement.
- Updates on wipes litigation from around the country, including:
 - Cases that were defeated by wipes manufacturers,
 - Cases that were recently put on hold by the judge, and
 - Cases that have sustained challenges and represent a potential for improved product development and better labeling.
- The Product Stewardship Initiative being completed by the wipes manufacturers, APWA, WEF, and NACWA, and how this complements improvements in “what does flushable mean?”
- Administrative alternatives to traditional SUO Notices of Violation that will pay off better than fines.
- How to figure out what those things are in your system so you can focus your enforcement, education, and/or capital upgrades on the right product(s).

About the Instructor:

Aubrey Strause

Owner
Verdant Water, PLLC
Scarborough, ME

Aubrey Strause’s experience includes wastewater infrastructure asset management, (including Capacity, Management, Operation and Maintenance programs and Operations and Maintenance Planning) and stormwater management (municipal and industrial). She has been the facilitator of the Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition since it formed in 2011.

Ms. Strause has been involved in the “wipes” issue since 2009, when she realized it was impacting POTWs in Maine. As a volunteer, Aubrey was the coordinator for the Maine Water Environment Association’s (MEWEA’s; formerly known as the Maine WasteWater Control Association) Pilot Educational Campaign “Save Your Pipes: Don’t Flush Baby Wipes”, a \$113,000 project implemented and funded in conjunction with INDA, the industry association that represents manufacturers of “flushable” wipes, baby wipes, and other nonwoven fabric products. She is one of few people able to identify unique nonwoven products, by manufacturer and brand, in sewage, thereby helping municipalities focus their public education, enforcement and capital resources. She assists towns, utilities, attorneys, and regulatory agencies to understand the types of materials entering these systems.

Ms. Strause was awarded the “2015 Regional Wastewater Trainer of the Year Excellence Award” by the U.S. EPA’s New England regional office for the wipes training she provided during a regional conference.