

Toilets Are Not Trashcans!

Protect Public Utility Pipes, Pumps, Plants, & Personnel from Wipes

Wipes and other consumer products cause problems for wastewater utilities by clogging pumps, blocking screens and accumulating in other treatment equipment. These problems are expensive – *utilities nationwide spend up to \$1 billion each year solving these issues.*



DC Water spent \$100,000 repairing the Upper Anacostia Pumping Station after it was clogged with wipes.



Utility workers are also placed at risk of physical injury and illness from removing sewage-soaked wipes from equipment.

Two problems are associated with wipes:

1. Non-flushable wipes are not labeled clearly, so consumers do not know to dispose of them in the trashcan, not the toilet,
2. Wipes labeled “flushable” do not actually break down well in real sewer systems.

Both problems are addressed in DC’s Nonwoven Disposable Products Act of 2016.

The wipes industry has also published a **voluntary** Code of Practice for labeling non-flushable wipes, but it allows the “Do not flush” logo to be placed on the back of packages, where consumers have little chance to see it:



“Do not flush” logo on the back of baby wipes package.



The wastewater associations and INDA, the trade association of the nonwoven fabrics industry, have reached agreement on a new labeling Code of Practice that will recommend “Do not flush” logos on the tops of wipe packages:



“Do not flush” logo on the front of baby wipes package.



“Do not flush” logo

These logos will help educate consumers that these wipes should not be flushed. **However, this labeling Code of Practice is voluntary – wipes legislation such as DC’s law can make clear labeling mandatory.**

The wipes industry has also published a **voluntary** set of flushability guidelines but these guidelines are inadequate. In the photos: After traveling through a real sewer for 30 minutes, toilet paper (1) has completely disintegrated, while a “flushable” wipe (A) is completely intact:



Toilet paper - only ID tag remains



“Flushable” wipe – completely intact

National associations representing wastewater utilities – The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), the Water Environment Federation (WEF), and the American Public Works Association (APWA) – have been working with INDA, the trade association of the nonwoven fabrics industry, on updating the flushability guidelines. **The wastewater associations submitted a proposal to INDA in August 2016 and have received no response to this proposal from INDA.**



Wastewater experts, not wipes manufacturers, should decide what is safe to flush into sewer systems. A previous version of the INDA flushability guidelines produced this wipe, which could be flushed 100 times without breaking apart! This wipe was the subject of a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) consent order for falsely claiming it was “flushable.”

An international group of wastewater experts is working on a flushability standard, which will be published in July 2017.

Technology now exists to produce truly flushable wipes, but U.S. manufacturers have not adopted the technology. Truly flushable wipes are on the market in Japan and Europe. These wipes break apart quickly after flushing and are made of 100% biodegradable, cellulosic materials. These wipes will pass the flushability standard being developed by international wastewater experts.



This Japanese wipe breaks apart completely after 15 seconds of stirring.

Support for wipes legislation will ensure that wipes manufacturers are held accountable for their flushability claims and for labeling their products truthfully. This will protect public utilities, their workers, and the environment.

For more information, contact:



www.nacwa.org/toilets



www.protectyourpipes.org

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