

West Virginia American Water Warns Against Flushing Sanitizing and “Flushable” Wipes

Use of wipes impacts wastewater treatment facilities and could lead to sewer backups and unexpected repair bills

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (March 21, 2020) – With hand hygiene at the top of everyone’s minds and toilet paper in high demand, many households are increasing their use of sanitizing wipes and “flushable” wipes. However, West Virginia American Water is urging all citizens, in particular its Fayetteville area wastewater customers, not to flush these wipes down the toilet. Flushing wipes, paper towels, or other paper products not intended for use in wastewater systems can lead to sewer backups and in-home plumbing issues which may be expensive to repair. Even wipes labeled as “flushable” or “biodegradable” can cause backups for sewer utilities and headaches for homeowners.

“Flushing or dumping the wrong things down the drain can cause problems in your local sewer system and cause blockages in your own home,” said John Pentasuglia, senior operations manager for West Virginia American Water. “Many sewer blockages occur between your house and our sewer main, where the property owner is responsible for correcting and paying for the repair. During this already stressful time, we want to help our customers avoid blockages that could create costly plumbing emergencies.”

Pentasuglia added that improper disposal can also cause problems in the local sewer system. “Your dedicated local wastewater system employees continue to come to work every day and make sure your community’s sewage is being properly treated,” he continued. “We provide an essential service, so please help us out by putting wipes, paper towels and other products in the trash where they belong, not in your sewer system where they can damage our equipment and cause blockages.”

In addition to wipes, West Virginia American Water also warns against pouring grease, fat or oil down the drain. When washed down the drain, grease and oil can adhere to the insides of the pipes that carry the wastewater from homes and businesses to the sewer treatment facility. Over time, this buildup of grease can restrict the flow of wastewater, leading to blockages that can cause sewage overflows or backups in homes and businesses. It can also have an adverse effect on the environment if the overflow enters local rivers, lakes and streams.

West Virginia American Water encourages adults and kids alike to watch this “12 Things That Should Never Go Down Your Drain” 30-second [video](#) and print and post this [poster](#) in areas near sinks and toilets.

Additional tips for homeowners include:

- Allow grease to cool and use a rubber scraper to remove the fat, oil and grease from cookware, plates, utensils and cooking surfaces. Then place the grease in a sealed container and dispose of it in the trash.
- Install baskets/strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and empty them into the trash.
- Keep in mind, garbage disposals do not prevent grease from washing down the drain. Also, detergents that claim to dissolve grease may pass it down the line and cause problems in other parts of the wastewater system.
- More information and tips can be found on the [West Virginia American Water website](#).

West Virginia American Water, a subsidiary of American Water (NYSE: AWK), is the largest investor-owned water utility in the state, providing high-quality and reliable water services to approximately 550,000 people. With a history dating back to 1886, American Water is the largest and most geographically diverse U.S. publicly traded water and wastewater utility company. The company employs more than 7,100 dedicated professionals who provide regulated and market-based drinking water, wastewater and other related services to more than 14 million people in 46 states. American Water provides safe, clean, affordable and reliable water services to our customers to make sure we keep their lives flowing. More information can be found at www.westvirginiaamwater.com.

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