

What Not To Flush

The Babcock Ranch Water Utilities Wastewater System is a marvel of engineering and operations. It uses state of the art equipment to transport and transform waste products into reclaimed water used to irrigate the entire community. This is accomplished using pipes, pumps and the Wastewater Reclamation Facility. At the facility, wastes are treated using natural means, specifically bacteria and other microorganisms. While the award-winning utility does an outstanding job, there are challenges that system and plant operators face daily that you can help us with using some simple habit changes. As mentioned, the plant uses biology to treat the waste product, which means the facility can only treat readily biodegradable materials so only biodegradable materials should be disposed of in the system. Examples of Non-Biodegradable Materials typically observed in sewer systems include:

- Plastic products like grocery bags, plastic bags, cardboard, water bottles, etc.
- Metals, metal cans, tins, metal scraps, etc.
- Construction waste, rubber tires, man-made fibers like nylon etc.
- Computer hardware like glass, CDs, DVDS, cellophane, processed woods, cable wires, Styrofoam etc.
- Toxic chemicals such as alcohol, bactericides/disinfection chemicals, paint, oil, herbicides or any other toxic materials.
- Unused medication, prescription and over-the-counter medications

Being that the plant is a living process, flushing toxic chemicals down the drain can actually kill the process leading to poor or non-existent treatment. We ask that all chemicals be used and disposed of in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

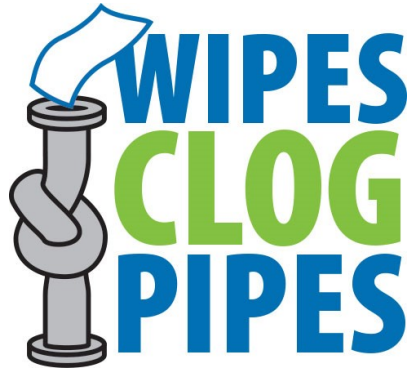
Even items that say "flushable" may damage your plumbing and pose challenges to the sewer system. In maintaining the Community's sewer system, daily staff removes quite a bit of material that may result in significant corrective maintenance and possible interruption of service.



If it doesn't have "toilet" in front of the word paper, it is not a paper product that you can flush. Tissue paper, cardboard applicators, paper towels, and paper cores will not break down enough in the waste stream, potentially causing blockages in piping and pumps or affecting the biology at the wastewater treatment plant. "Flushable" cat litter clumps together when wet, like a rock.

And, then we have the most horrendous "flushable" item plaguing the sewer industry today... the "flushable" wipe. They are nearly indestructible! Google "flushable wipes clog," and you will find about 68,500 different links that you can read about. Every collection system has experienced a system stoppage caused by these wipes that have become caught on pump housings, inlet

screens and rough pipe or manhole surfaces. According to the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, this problem is costing U.S. utilities up to \$1 billion annually, costs that are passed on to ratepayers such as you and me.



Single-use wet wipes have gained popularity in recent years. Many of these products are marketed as flushable, but often times are not compatible with sewer systems and infrastructure. Other products are not intended to be flushed but end up being improperly disposed of in the toilet. Flushing these products presents an increasing problem for property owners, sewer systems, and ratepayers, since wipes often do not break down after being flushed. Wipes can catch on tree roots and accumulate with fats, oils and grease and become large obstructions in the pipes. Further down the line, they weave together and create giant rags which get stuck in pumps, collection systems and motors, causing backups and equipment failures. This problem is experienced across the state, country and worldwide as disposable wet wipe products become more widely available.

Most kitchen sinks in Babcock Ranch have garbage disposals, but even though it can grind through almost anything you can feed it, it doesn't mean you should do it. There are three questions you should ask yourself before you dump that product down the drain.

- Is it organic? If not, then trash it. Inorganics are highly susceptible to settling at the bottom of your piping, reducing the amount of flow which can pass through. Two ubiquitous inorganic items that people feed their disposal which they shouldn't are coffee grounds and egg shells.
- Will the liquid I pour down the drain float above water? If unsure, try it in a cup. If you find out it does, then it should go in the trash. Most items in this category will be grease and used cooking oil. A small solid container such as an old coffee can, would be an excellent choice for housing this liquid until its final destination to the trash. Even after pouring out the grease or oil from pans, make sure to wipe the excess out with a napkin or paper towel to minimize the amount entering the drain. Oil and grease adhere to pipe walls and act like glue, attracting everything it comes in contact with, constricting the flow through piping.

If the material in question starts out as solid or semi-solid, melts down to a liquid when heated and if left out at room temperature, becomes a solid again, it will become solid in the pipes. Perfect examples of this would be butter, vegetable shortening and lard. If it transforms at room temperature, it will solidify in pipes. Doing so will save your plumbing as well because as the material cools and solidifies in your plumbing under your home, it can accumulate, resulting in a hefty plumbing bill.

