

**March 18, 2020**

**BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU FLUSH! HOW TO AVOID COSTLY SEWER BACK UPS**

As residents stockpile disinfecting wipes and paper towels to clean their homes more often to reduce the risk of coronavirus, we must urge our customers to keep one thing in mind: Don't flush them down the toilet.

Wipes and paper towels do not break down like toilet paper does in water. They are stronger, and many wipes include plastics and materials like nylon. That means bad news for sewer systems, some of which already are experiencing problems during the coronavirus crisis.

Flushing wipes, paper towels and similar products down toilets will clog sewers and cause backups and overflows at wastewater treatment facilities, creating an additional public health risk in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Even wipes labeled "flushable" will clog pipes and interfere with sewage collection and treatment. **DO NOT FLUSH!**

They should be thrown away in the trash after use.

The wipes, which kill most bacteria and viruses, are in huge demand due to the spread of COVID-19.

In normal times when folks aren't at home all day long, these wipes cause problems. But now that we have people at home all day long, we are concerned for what might be coming.

Apart from increased cleaning, one thing that may be happening, experts say, is that people who have run out of toilet paper are using paper towels and other materials in the bathroom instead. Prinz said if that is case, they should put the used paper in a plastic bag, seal it, and dispose of it in the trash rather than flushing it.

The pipe you block may be your own. You can block your own sewer lateral to the street. Then your toilet won't flush. Your shower won't drain. The homeowner is responsible for maintaining the plumbing in the home and the sewer lateral from the home to the sewer main under the street.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [has recommended](#) that Americans disinfect counter tops, doorknobs, tables, TV remote controls, light switches and other hard surfaces regularly to reduce the spread of coronavirus. Even during a time of crisis like this, we should be sure we're not doing things that might inadvertently cause sewer line blockages and sewage spills that could harm public health.