

The Drain Report



FLUSHABLE WIPES?

By: Ken Kase

Nobody asked the sewer district if these things are flushable or not. You know what I am talking about, those pre-moistened disposable fibrous sheets often referred to as wipes. Many manufacturers of these wipes print right on the label that the correct method of disposal is to flush them. At the sewer district we are on the receiving end of these wipes and I can tell you for certain that these things do not belong in the sewer! If you have a septic system I would not put them down the drain either.

When you flush these sturdy little wipes down the drain you are flushing trouble. If we are lucky they will get stuck in your own privately owned plumbing or side sewer. Many of these wipes get past your pipes and enter the public system where they can cause damage on a massive scale! Inside the sewer they can mix with grease and form a plug made of congealed grease and wipes that can challenge any sewer maintenance crew. If these nasty little wipes manage to get through our pipes they end up at our pump stations where they can clog even the biggest pumps. Our pump station crew has to pull pumps to remove clogs caused by wipes at least weekly and sometimes daily. You would be surprised to learn how abrasive these wipes are to our pumping equipment.

The District has spent over a quarter of a million dollars to install a sophisticated grinder system at our 7th Ave. pump station, just to prevent the damage these wipes can cause. This is the cost at only one pump station. We have 13 pump stations and many of them remain unprotected from these "flushable" wipes.

If you are uncertain whether or not a wipe product is flushable, there is a simple test you can do. Place a sample of the wipe material in a container of water and stir it. If the wipe breaks down into smaller pieces then it is flushable. If it does not break down into smaller pieces then you should dispose of this product in the trash! Thank you in advance for not flushing these so called flushable wipes.



IT PAYS TO SHOP!

By: Ken Kase



Repairing or constructing a sewer is not the most popular expenditure an individual can make. Buying something you really want can be a rewarding experience. I seriously doubt that someone feels rewarded after buying a sewer repair. But if you shop around for that repair you may save yourself enough money to go and buy something that will give you that rewarding feeling.

If you need a sewer or a sewer repair I recommend you get several bids. Make sure you clearly communicate what it is you want done. If you do this and the bids you get are responsive to your request it should be fairly easy to compare the bids. If all the prices are close then you know that the price is probably close to what it should cost. If the prices vary by a large margin then there may be something wrong. Either the bids were for different services or amount of services or perhaps the contractor was hoping to make a healthy profit.

It also helps if you are not in a big hurry to get the repair done immediately. Some contractors will work at any time of the day or night to fix your problems but this service can come at a premium. You may be able to save yourself a bundle if you are willing to stay in a hotel for a night or two and have the work done during regular business hours. It can save you a considerable amount of your hard earned money if you take the time to shop around!

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Special points of interest:

- Midway Sewer District has one of the lowest monthly rates in the state.
- The Board meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Please contact the office for the meeting time.
- Midway serves the Cities of Des Moines, SeaTac, Kent, Federal Way, Normandy Park, Burien, and the Port of Seattle's SeaTac Airport.
- We have been part of this community since 1946.
- You can expect fast personal service when you need it.
- Our employees care about their customers.
- We have a single focus of providing quality sanitary sewer service.

SEWER FLOW

By: George Landon



In the song titled, "Sewer Flow" the question is asked, "Where do my milk and my cookies go, counter-clockwise down the toilet hole?" This is a question that many people don't spend a lot of time thinking about. To some people the whole concept of wastewater is not even given a second thought. It is to say, out of sight, out of mind.

The journey that your wastewater takes from a home or business to final discharge is actually very interesting. Once wastewater passes through your plumbing fixture it enters your waste plumbing which is a system of pipes designed to convey wastewater away from your premises and allow gases to escape while allowing air to enter the pipes to help with proper draining.

Your plumbing drains to your side sewer, which uses the force of gravity to further convey your wastewater to the edge of your property. Your wastewater then joins with the wastewater of your neighbors in a vast network of inclined underground pipes.

The Midway Sewer District operates over 143 miles of gravity sewers and 5.5 miles of force main to safely transport your wastewater to the Des Moines Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. In a typical year we convey, treat and dispose of over 1.5 billion gallons of wastewater weighing over 12.5 billion pounds.

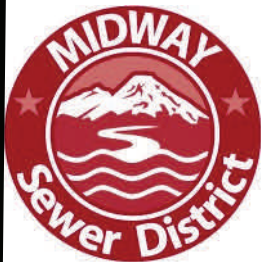
The journey does not end here. At the treatment plant, the sewage goes through a series of processes to clean your wastewater to an acceptable level. At arrival, screening devices remove most of the garbage and other processes remove the heavier gritty particles. The resulting wastewater, laden with organic matter enters a quiescent chamber known as a clarifier where the natural separation of materials that tend to either float or sink can take place. The "floaters and sinkers" are sent to an anaerobic digester where bacteria are used to consume as much matter as is practical. The liquid portion that passes through the clarifier is then sent to the secondary treatment side of the plant for further processing.

During secondary treatment the liquid is pumped to the top of what is known as a trickling filter. These filters are packed with a media which have a large amount of surface area. On this surface area a film of aerobic bacteria form and the liquid gently cascades down upon the bacteria covered media. The bacteria consume most of the remaining organic matter in the liquid. The liquid that passes through these filters then enters a serpentine chamber where compressed air is bubbled through the liquid. This helps to make the remaining particles heavier than water. This liquid enters another clarifier where the remaining particles sink to the bottom. They are collected and either sent to join the other "floaters and sinkers" in the anaerobic digester or return to the serpentine chamber to be aerated again. The liquid that passes through these clarifiers is then subjected to a disinfection process that pretty much destroys any remaining bacteria. This completes our treatment process where approximately 95% of the "strength" of your wastewater has been removed, but the journey of your wastewater continues.

The treated wastewater, which appears clear, enters a special pipe known as an outfall. The outfall transports the treated wastewater about 2 miles from the plant to a place about 1,700 feet from shore and at a depth of about 165 below the surface of Puget Sound. Here at the end of the outfall your treated wastewater is carefully blended with the surrounding seawater at a prescribed mixing ratio.

You might think that the journey of your wastewater ends here, but some of the seawater evaporates and enters the atmosphere where clouds will form and float back over our area where they will fall as rain. Some of this rain will percolate through the earth to the aquifers below. Some of this aquifer water will be pumped to the surface through wells and into a public water system where it will receive some treatment before entering the public water distribution system and eventually back to your home or business, where the water will be used and the journey will begin all over again. Please contact the District if you are interested in a tour of our treatment plant where you can see first hand the sewer flow.

Board of Commissioners



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