

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE FLUSH?

Trash it! Don't Flush it!

“Out of sight, out of mind” is the attitude most of us have when it comes to flushing the toilet, running the dishwasher or popping the bathtub drain. But all that dirty water leaving your residence is called “wastewater” which has to end up somewhere. That “somewhere” is the Easton Area Joint Sewer Authority’s (EAJSA) Wastewater Treatment Plant. This plant runs the wastewater through a process that progressively removes solids, dissolved solids and harmful pathogens. By the time water is released into the Delaware River, it has spent many hours in the facility and is clean enough to provide a daily source of clean, fresh water to the river – an average of 5 to 6 million gallons per day.

Before the wastewater arrives at the treatment plant it first must travel through lateral pipes connected to your home, apartment, business, etc., via gravity to our collection system pipes and manholes used to access these pipes. From Palmer Township’s collection system it enters the EAJSA’s system where there are a series of large interceptor pipes, manholes and pumping stations that “pump” the water to the next point along the way. If there are no blockages in the pipes this wastewater reaches the treatment plant.

Sewer backups can cause damage to homes, health hazards and threaten the environment. Sewer pipes blocked by grease or personal items are an increasing common cause of overflows from manholes.

What is the problem and how am I affected?

Sometimes there are blockages in the collection system pipes or pump stations. These blockages may cause sewage overflows and back-ups in your home, you neighbor’s home, our waterways, on public property and just about wherever water can find a way out.

More often than not these blockages can be attributed to improper disposal of personal items, such a diapers, feminine hygiene products, baby wipes, grease and fat from cooking, articles of clothing, bedding materials, towels, and rags into the sewer system. Everything you flush down your toilet, grind up in your garbage disposal and pour in your drains ends up at the treatment plant (albeit not in its original form).

For instance, suppose you accidentally flush a washcloth down your toilet. If it doesn’t clog your system and manages to move through your pipes it eventually ends up at the pumping station where it has joined hundreds of other rags, diapers, toys, plastic applicators, and other items that clog up the pumps and prevent them from working properly. Best case scenario – a pump station technician is able to remove the pump from service, clear the blockage, reassemble, prime the pump and return it to service. Worst case scenario -- the pump has been trying to run and is damaged. This leads to costly repairs, a pump station minus a pump that must be monitored more closely to prevent sewer overflows or back-ups from occurring, added stress on our wastewater system and increases our operating costs.

How much trash really ends up in the system?

We have equipment that catches and removes the majority of unwanted, larger items (non-waste) from the wastewater if and when they get to the treatment plant. These removed items are deposited into dumpsters and sent to the landfill. The EAJSA treatment plant removes about 100 tons of rags and other trash items each year from the influent wastewater.

Our sewer system is not designed to collect trash. Human waste and toilet tissue are the only products the wastewater system was designed to handle. As a ratepayer in Palmer Township this affects you because continued use of our sewer system for trash disposal contributes to system failures, added stress and wear, and increased operation and maintenance costs.

How can you help?

We can all help maintain our infrastructure by adopting a few simple practices:

Please do not flush:

- Diapers
- Used bandages
- Rags
- Dental floss
- Cotton balls/Q-tips
- Personal hygiene products
- Toys
- Paper towels
- Toothbrushes
- Baby/Cleaning wipes
- Leftover foods/sauces
- Articles of clothing/bedding

Please do not pour down drains:

- Grease, all used cooking oils, and leftover sauces and gravies(allow to cool and solidify, then scrape out and wrap in newspaper and dispose of in your trash can or allow to cool and then pour into a non-recyclable container and dispose of in your trash can)
- Household/gardening chemicals
- Paint
- Engine oil
- Leftover cleaners/solvents

With everyone's help the Palmer Township Utility Department and the EAJSA can limit the number of sewer overflows and back-ups due to blockages in the system thereby eliminating the need for costly clean-ups and possible contamination of our waterways and endangerment of public health.

If you would like more information, please contact Alexandria Hoffman at (610) 250-6706.

Remember, prevention is the key. Keep your pipes and drains "fat-free".