



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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It's a toilet, not a trashcan! *Wipe down bathrooms and counters and sanitize, but only flush toilet paper*



Cashel says "only flush toilet paper!"

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has inspired the world to model safe and best cleaning practices. But while disinfecting wipes are effective, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is seeing a rise in the number of wipes stuck on the screens at water reclamation plants (WRPs) that normally filter out debris during the first critical steps of the wastewater treatment process.

The MWRD is encouraging toilet users to still be mindful when flushing. That means only flushing toilet paper. Wipe products labeled as "flushable" can clog pipes and require unwanted plumber visits. They can also interrupt or damage equipment. By flushing with care, toilet users

can protect the water environment and prevent costly damage from sewer overflows and backups.

"Toilet paper is the only item we should be flushing down a toilet," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "Wipes are helpful at a time we need to clean, but these are not flushable or biodegradable. Everything else should be deposited in the trash can, recycled, or composted."

The MWRD is a member of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA). It advises that wipes, paper towels and feminine hygiene products when flushed can cause problems for utilities that amount to "billions of dollars in maintenance and repair costs." These costs are ultimately passed on to taxpayers.



Screens are used to filter out debris as it reaches the MWRD water reclamation plants, but wipes, paper towels, tissues and other products can accumulate and stick to equipment. With more disinfecting wipes being used, the MWRD urges the public to only flush toilet paper.

It's a toilet, not a trashcan! *cont.*

In these uncertain times of COVID-19 and shuttered schools, institutions and business, MWRD staff is still hard at work protecting the public health and the environment. Water continues flowing and the MWRD is here to clean it and return it to the environment, so keeping wipes and other harmful products out of the sewers and pipes is important to protecting the community.

“We thank the residents and business owners we serve for being vigilant in protecting our drains and pipes,” said MWRD Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Together we can protect our essential systems and improve our water environment in the process.”

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FLUSH WITH CARE

The toilet is an important fixture that has been skillfully designed for only one activity. Although people know what that activity is, many people misuse their toilet and don't flush with care. The toilet is not a trash can. Flushing with care means to only flush the 3Ps—pee, poop, and (toilet) paper. Everything else should be deposited in the trash can, recycled, or composted.

DO NOT FLUSH UNWANTED MEDICATION!
Take medicine to a safe drug collection box at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) or another designated facility. Visit mwrld.org for a complete list of our collection boxes, along with others located throughout Cook County.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T FLUSH WITH CARE
Flushing items that don't belong in the toilet can harm the local sewer system, water reclamation plants (WRPs), and the water environment. Flushing with care can prevent costly damage from sewer overflows and backups.

WHAT NOT TO FLUSH

- Contact Lenses
- Dental Floss
- Diapers (this includes related products such as inserts, liners, etc.)
- Hair
- Cat Litter
- Fish
- Wipes (any kind... yes, including those labeled "flushable" or "biodegradable")
- Paper Towels
- Facial Tissue
- Personal Hygiene Products
- Cosmetics
- Medication & Vitamins
- Medical Supplies
- Cotton Swabs
- Cleaning Products
- Food
- Fats, Oils & Grease
- Household Hazardous Waste (paint, oil, chemicals, fuel, etc.)
- Toothbrushes
- Plastic Items

**ONLY FLUSH THE 3Ps
PEE, POOP, & (TOILET) PAPER**

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https://mwrld.org/sites/default/files/documents/FlushWithCare_200323.pdf

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.