

Flushable Wipes Cause Damage to City Sewer Systems

Not only are flushable wipes harmful to your home's plumbing and septic system, but they are also terrible for larger municipal sewer plant systems. If your flushable wipes pass through your own sewer pipes without an issue, they can still wreak havoc at the City of Horseshoe Bay's sewage treatment plant.

If this occurs, the integrity of the town's whole sewer system becomes at risk. Wastewater problems and citywide lift station and grinder plumbing problems can arise when a town's sewage plant is not running smoothly. This could culminate in millions of tax dollars spent on repairs to both domestic household grinder systems and city infrastructure.

What Are Flushable Wipes?

Flushable wipes are moist towelettes that manufacturers claim to be safe for plumbing systems. You'll find many kinds of wipes claiming to be flushable on the market today. Some of the varieties of flushable wipes are baby wipes, cosmetic wipes, toilet wipes, and antibacterial cleansing wipes.

The flushable wipes of most concern are bathroom wipes. Some people have replaced their toilet paper with flushable wipes entirely! While this may seem convenient, or like a superior cleansing method, it is simply more problematic than you think.

Can I Use Flushable Wipes?

Are flushable wipes bad for grinder pumps, plumbing and the city wastewater plant? The answer, unfortunately, is **“yes.”** By design, toilet paper disintegrates quickly in water. Flushable wipes need to be more durable to soak up the liquid cleanser they sit in before use.

The problem is that while wipes seem to flush easily, once they get into the plumbing, **they don't break down**. The result is frequent clogs and blockages. As you continue to flush additional wipes, a blockage can become massive and more problematic.

Flushable wipes don't disintegrate, and that causes them to block up your grinder pump and sewer line. Eventually the remnants of the wipes make their way to the city wastewater treatment plant and require additional expense to remove them from the biological process. With continuous usage, flushable wipes can cause more severe issues like burned-out grinder motors and sewer mainline blockages that may lead to flooding of your house or workplace. All these issues affect your sewer rates negatively.

If you use flushable wipes, the best practice is to dispose of them in a waste basket. Your grinder pumps and the city wastewater treatment plant, as well as city field utility staff, will thank you! Proper disposal of wipes will prolong the grinder pump life cycle and allow the lift stations throughout the city to operate efficiently, allowing only the waste that was intended to end up at the wastewater plant to be properly treated. This simple fix of disposing of all “flushable wipes” in a waste basket will allow for a longer life cycle on all wastewater equipment and your grinder system.

Aren't Flushable Wipes Tested?

No mandate exists in the United States for the testing of flushable wipes. Manufacturers may have no “flushability team” checking on the wipes' ability to dissolve or pass through a plumbing system safely. That means companies can label any wipe they manufacture as “flushable,” with no consequences to themselves.

Industry standards are not required to prove that flushable wipes can dissolve in water like most toilet paper. The wipes are considered “flushable” simply because they will flush down your toilet, but that is all! Between your toilet and your grinder system, the wipes do not dissolve, eventually causing grinders to fail. Grinders, by design, are made only to grind human waste and toilet paper.

House Bill 501 has been introduced in the 89th Texas Legislature to remove language for advertising these wipes as flushable but has not received much support to date. The City supports this bill and will pursue any bill that supports reducing maintenance costs for our citizens.

For more information, please contact Joel Green, Wastewater Plant Supervisor, at 830.598.9983. Visit www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov/wipes to learn more and view a video about the harm these wipes can cause.



The infographic features a blue background at the top with a white toilet. A hand is shown dropping a white wipe into the toilet, which is crossed out with a large red 'X'. To the right of the toilet, the text 'FLUSHABLE WIPES' is written in large white letters, followed by 'CAUSE DAMAGE TO CITY SEWER SYSTEMS' in smaller white letters. Below this, a list of five numbered points is presented in blue rounded rectangles. To the right of the list is a black trash can with a large green checkmark. At the bottom right is the City of Horseshoe Bay, Texas Utilities logo, which includes a star, a water drop, and the text 'CITY OF HORSESHOE BAY TEXAS UTILITIES 2005 WATER IS LIFE'.

FLUSHABLE WIPES

CAUSE DAMAGE TO CITY SEWER SYSTEMS

- 1 Flushable wipes don't disintegrate once inside plumbing.
- 2 Wipes can cause clogs and blockages in your grinder and sewer line, resulting in costly issues or flooding.
- 3 Once at the wastewater treatment plant, wipes require additional expense to be removed.
- 4 If you use flushable wipes, the best practice is to dispose of them in a waste basket.
- 5 This includes baby wipes, cosmetic wipes, toilet wipes, and antibacterial cleansing wipes.

