

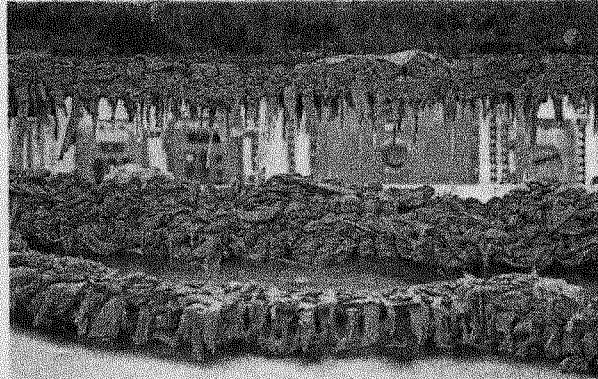
DEP: Stop flushing cleaning wipes and similar products

By Chrissy Suttles
Beaver County Times

Pennsylvanians continue to clog the state's sewage treatment facilities with disinfecting wipes and other non-flushable items, causing headaches for state employees.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection on Wednesday urged residents to resist flushing anything other than toilet paper and human waste as the department combats a spike in non-flushable materials clogging filters and equipment since stay-at-home orders were issued in March.

Residents should avoid flushing disinfecting wipes, paper towels or other non-flushable items that can be disposed of in a trash bin. This includes tissues and single-use wipes, such as



Experts note that "flushable" wipes often take so long to disintegrate, they end up caught in pumps and at collection sites. Facial tissues also wreak havoc on wastewater systems. [KARSTEN MORAN/THE NEW YORK TIMES]

cleansing and diaper wipes that may be labeled as "flushable" or "biodegradable." Other non-flushable items are diapers, feminine hygiene products, disposable toilet brushes, disposable gloves and dental floss.

"Flushing things that aren't meant to be flushed

can damage your own sewer pipes as well as the sewer treatment facilities that we all depend on," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "Even so-called 'flushable' wipes shouldn't be put in the toilet."

These products do not break down similarly to toilet

MORE HOUSEHOLD TIPS ...

- Allow grease to cool and use a rubber scraper to remove the fat, oil and grease from cookware, plates, utensils and cooking surfaces. Then place the grease in a sealed container and dispose of it in the trash.
- Install baskets/strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and empty them into the trash.
- Keep in mind, garbage disposals do not prevent grease from washing down the drain.
- Detergents that claim to dissolve grease may pass it down the line and cause problems in other parts of the wastewater system.
- More information and tips can be found online at amwater.com/paaw.

paper and can clog systems quickly; many sewer blockages occur between your house or business and the sewer main, where the property owner is responsible for correcting and paying for the repair.

Blockages can also lead to sewage overflows that can

have adverse effects on the environment, especially if the overflow enters local rivers, lakes and streams.

The department also encouraged residents to refrain from disposing of food scraps, grease, fat or oil down the drain; these should be disposed of in the trash to

help keep wastewater pipes clear.

Food buildup can solidify and adhere to the insides of pipes that carry wastewater from homes and businesses to the wastewater treatment plant. Over time, these buildups can restrict the flow of wastewater.

Garbage disposals do not prevent grease from washing down the drain. Detergents that claim to dissolve grease may pass it down the line and cause problems in other parts of the wastewater system, the DEP said.

Flushing anything other than toilet paper can damage internal plumbing, local sewer systems, and septic systems. Fixing these backups is costly and takes time and resources away from ensuring that wastewater management systems are otherwise working properly.