

# WHAT'S ON TAP



NEWS FOR DC WATER CUSTOMERS • VOLUME 18 ISSUE 9

## Don't flush wipes— they clog sewers



Disposable wipes wreak havoc on sewer systems across the country, around the globe and here in DC. Baby wipes, and adult hygiene products, tout their flushability on packaging. In reality, very few of these products break down in the toilet or the pipes. The result? Nasty sewer clogs, back-ups and pump failures as the wipes clog equipment all along their route to the wastewater treatment plant. These clogs can cause untreated sewage to back up into streets, waterways, or even your home.

Nationally, the problem costs utilities up to \$1 billion a year. Here in DC, wipes create massive clogs in the pumps and on screens at the Main and O Street Pumping Stations, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

Wipes often tangle with dental floss or glob together with congealed fats, oils and grease, to cause giant obstructions. "It's like a gluing agent that can capture other things and cause backups," says DC Water CEO and General Manager George S. Hawkins.

Late last year, the DC Council passed the Nonwoven Disposable Products Labeling Act of 2016, requiring wipes sold in the District to be labeled "flushable" only if they break apart "in a short period of time after flushing in the

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— George S. Hawkins, CEO & General Manager

low-force conditions of a sewer system." Wipes that do not meet the standard will need to be labeled as something that should not be flushed. And currently most wipes sold in DC do not dissolve.

For now, consumers should throw wipes in the trash to dispose of them, just like they would anything other than toilet paper. As a reminder, the only items that should be flushed down the toilet are the three P's—poo, pee and (toilet) paper.

In the coming year, in the District you will be able to trust the labels on wipes packaging to know which ones are safe to flush and which should still be thrown in the trash.

## General Manager's Message

Recently, employees from DC Water joined members of DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services and DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management to respond to Florida after Hurricane Irma. It was the first time a water/wastewater utility joined such a team.



Our staff departed September 9, traveling in command vehicles, weathering the hurricane in Savannah, GA with other emergency responders at Hunter Army Air Field, where they slept on cots in the gymnasium. Continuing on to Florida, they encountered tension at the few gas stations that were open and sought food and lodging in cities with devastating power outages.

The team was one of many nationwide responding to Florida's request for help. The original mission to staff the State's Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee was met with an abundance of resources, resulting in teams being turned away once they arrived. Ours was one of them, but the group gained valuable experience in a deployment. In a final act of generosity, the team gave away extra fuel to families when their cars ran out of gas.

If we need it, DC Water also has the ability to request technical assistance and equipment through these networks should we have a similar need in the District.

*George S. Hawkins*

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## Stuff the turkey, not your drains

Home-cooked meals, football games, and crisp apple cider: Autumn is in the air, and the holidays are just around the corner. This is the season for visits from family, friends, neighbors, and—unfortunately—plumbers.

It has been reported that the day after Thanksgiving, calls to plumbing companies increase by 50 percent. The reason? Clogged pipes.

For some, the easiest way to dispose of cooking grease and food scraps is down the drain. But there it cools, congeals, and clogs pipes until water has nowhere to go.

Some of the improperly disposed of grease makes its way into sewers causing blockages, sewer backups, property damage, environmental problems, and other health hazards. Repairing the damage to home and community infrastructure is costly. It's up to all of us to protect our pipes.

**Food and grease should never go down the sink.** Do your part. Follow the 4 C's of sink safety: Cool, Contain, Can, Compost:

- **Cool:** After cooking, allow grease to cool and solidify in the pan.
- **Contain:** Scrape grease into a secure, sealable container like a peanut butter jar. Wipe down pots and pans with a paper towel before washing.
- **Can:** Throw the container of grease and paper towel into a trash can.
- **Compost:** If possible, compost food and vegetable scraps.

## Help a neighbor—give to SPLASH

DC Water employees launched a program years ago to provide financial assistance to families in the most dire of circumstances who face having their water shut off for non-payment. They dubbed the program SPLASH (Serving People by Lending a Supportive Hand) and the program has grown so that hundreds of families are helped every year.

The program is funded by customers and DC Water employees. Customers can use the Round Up feature, adding to the nearest dollar or \$2. They also have the option of donating above that amount. Non-customers can donate by making a check payable to DC Water SPLASH and mailing it to 5000 Overlook Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20032, 4th Floor. Qualifying customers may be eligible for a program that provides a discount on both water and sewer services. Contact the District Department of Energy and the Environment (DDOE) at (202) 673-6700 to apply. Many DC Water employees give passionately to SPLASH. Please join them this year!



## SPOTLIGHT ON EdFEST

My School DC is excited to host EdFEST – the District's annual citywide public school fair – on Saturday, December 9, 2017. Learn about the city's many public school options (PK3-12) and the public school lottery application process, which begins December 11, 2017 for the 2018-19 school year.



EdFEST is free and accessible by Metro rail (Stadium – Armory station; orange, blue and silver lines), Metro bus (B2, D6, E32, 96, 97), or by car (families can park for free). There will be Interpretation in American Sign Language, Spanish, Amharic, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and French.

Bring the whole family for free health screenings, story time, and more. You can stay up-to-date on EdFEST announcements by signing up for email and text alerts at [MySchoolDC.org](http://MySchoolDC.org). Or you can call the My School DC Hotline at (202) 888-6336 or email us at [info.myschooldc@dc.gov](mailto:info.myschooldc@dc.gov).

**Saturday, December 9, 2017 • 11 a.m.-3 p.m.**  
**DC Armory (2001 E Capitol St SE)**



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